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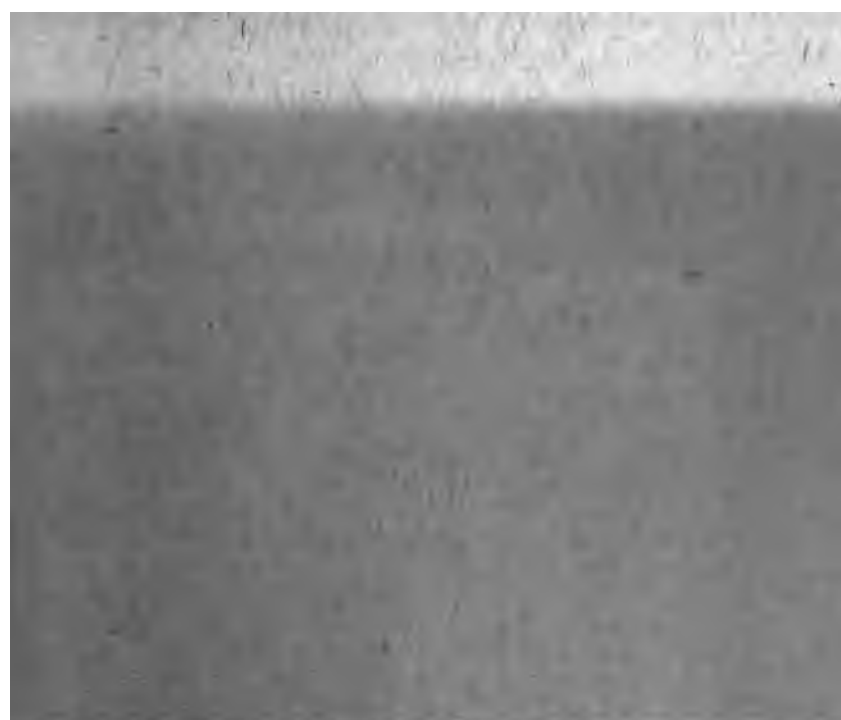
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by

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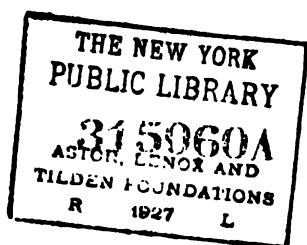
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PART I
THE RISING



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THE ISSUE

Chapter I

THE SPOTTED SUN

THERE is a belief among the "cotton-heads" of the South that on the thirteenth of August, 1831, God put His eye to the place where the sun should have been and watched the black people all day long.

One notes a variant in each tale; but, in the main, these plantation worthies agree. They dwell upon the awesomeness of the spectacle, the terror of it, the dread, —the expectation of some such sequent marvel as that at nightfall the all-powerful Lord who had thus spied them out would clap His hands in the sky, spark it with crackling stars, and burn up the world.

"He was green;" "he was blue;" "he was silver-faced,"—pickle-green; peacock-blue; molten silver, splotted with black.

In truth, the sun came up green; turned blue at mid-morning; silvered towards noon; and for the rest of the day showed in the heavens like a huge platter, strangely spotted. An enigma past solution, the phenomenon profoundly affected the superstitious millions who beheld it. Small wonder the negroes hid under the houses and in the thickets and brush-heaps.

Huff, of Le Butt's Sea Island plantation, just up the coast from Charleston, used to boast of his ability to make black men do the least thing he wished. He could lounge along behind a hoeing line of a hundred hands and, with a thundercloud rolling up, keep every eye to

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the ground and every eyelash steady; but now it was useless for him to crack his whip.

Even the Widow Wortley, in Southside Virginia, had trouble with her slaves on account of the Spotted Sun. Riding en croupe with Monsieur, the peripatetic music-teacher in those parts, one reaches the Widow Wortley's on this very occasion. Saturday forenoon was Monsieur's set time with his pupils at Burnt Ordinary. Since daybreak he had come eleven miles through the scrubbiest of old-field pines. The roads were cow-paths. Buzzards, hiding in the thickets, frightened him more than once. What with this desolation and the sun green with a greenness unspeakable, Monsieur feared lest he should die before he could get a julep and his breakfast.

But as he came out of the pines there opened before him a fair scene truly: Betsey Wortley's great white gate; Betsey's broad avenue, brightened with flowering shrubs and lined for a long mile with shapely cedars; Betsey's rich fields on either side, every fence as white as snow; Betsey's park of great oaks, one of which cast a shadow three hundred yards in circumference; Betsey's old colonial mansion; Betsey's far-stretching settlement of cabins, barns, cribs, storehouses, mills; and that feature of Burnt Ordinary most liked by Betsey herself,—the valley view to the east where ran the Nottoway, sparkling between its grassy banks to the distant, dark forests of Sussex.

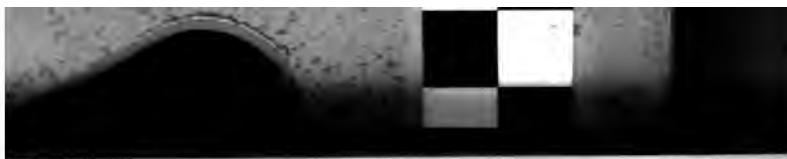
Yes, Betsey Wortley's matriarchate was clearly the masterpiece and model. Kings sniffed of the snuff she ground. Clothing she made for her people—shoes, hats, everything. Nor had she ever bought or sold a slave. It was a happy moment for Betsey when her daughter, Belle, read for her out of a Senate speech, a eulogium from the lips of Mr. Calhoun. Betsey herself could neither read nor write. She could trace "Elizabeth Wortley" on bond or deed, but only from arbitrary memory

THE SPOTTED SUN

of the twelve letters essential. Back of Betsey's illiteracy is a romance that has been told in a thousand Virginia porches: as thus,—hunters' tales about Betsey McRae, the "Blue Ridge beauty," who dwelt at the healing springs called Oaks of Saul; a visit of verification by the curious Colonel Wortley; surprise, delight, an hour's wooing; the speedy transfer of Betsey from her forest cabin to the most aristocratic of Dinwiddie mansions. But, since then, thirty years had passed. For twenty of these Wortley had slept in the garden; and briars hid his bed.

Betsey nowadays was by no means beautiful. Care had set a hard stamp upon her face. The lost lily and rose and velvet reappeared in Belle; Betsey herself was sharp-visaged and fallow. One eye was in ruins with cataract; the other looked out from between wrinkled lids. Only her hair was lovely as of old, but something strange had happened even to her hair. It was as if she had taken her hands out of soapsuds and clapped them to the sides of her head and smoothed backward. Some said that these white splashes above Betsey's temples were passion-marks. Rarely was there an outburst, but when it came she was for a brief space less woman than tigress.

Tiger-blood began to stir in Betsey very early on the day of the Spotted Sun. In their first terror the negroes came crowding around the house. She sent them to the fields. At nine o'clock most of them were huddled in the chapel grove beyond the quarters. Betsey walked the porch, listening. What if the sun were cutting up didoes? That was no excuse. What was old pommel-footed Ike praying so loudly about, when he ought to be worming tobacco? Belle and Elizabeth, her sister by adoption,—she was of the Wortley blood,—were with Monsieur in the parlor, whence issued a continuous thrumming. When Monsieur had ended his lessons in music and dancing and French, he appeared upon the



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porch, peeped up towards the sun, exclaimed, crossed himself, and chattered volubly to Betsey. He feared this was indeed a portent, signifying the end of the world. Doomsday surely must be foretold.

"Doomsday, fiddlesticks!" said Betsey, harkening to the voice of Roaring Ike and the amens of the hundreds who were with him.

Little Pete brought Monsieur's horse; and Betsey was glad when he was gone.

"Go fetch me Dan," said she to Pete; "go a-hiken, and tell him I'll cut his ears off if he don't come a-hiken!"

She entered the house, crossed the hall, and glided over the polished floor of the library to the stand where lay her cowhide. Only the cowhide was there on the shining surface of the bit of mahogany,—the cowhide and a morocco-gilt copy of the Songs of Solomon, of which the late Wortley had been fond. The cowhide was always to be found there. It had been there for twenty-five years. Betsey was pleased to see that Dan's Charlotte had kept the whip well dusted and oiled. The lash of it had never crossed good Charlotte's back. Betsey picked up the whip, bent it into a loop, drew it between her thin fingers, and swished it through the air.

Elizabeth and Belle heard the "swish" and came tiptoeing out of the parlor. They glanced at each other—beautiful young women, both of them; and, as Monsieur would have said, not made to be where cowhides were. They were still tiptoeing as they followed Betsey out upon the porch and thence to the lawn where with awe they viewed first the terrible sun and then the still more terrible cowhide.

At this moment there came loping up a little knot of a man, crying: "Yi, yi! hyar I is! My sarvice ter yo', miss!"

It was Charlotte's Dan,—Beersheby Dan,—the ancient of Betsey's realm. He had been at Burnt Ordinary time

THE SPOTTED SUN

out of mind. He had shod Tarleton's horse; and had seen Tarleton set fire to the tavern which gave the place its name, and leap his charger through the flame. All the British soldiers, Dan said, had bloody coats. "Dey'd bin womblasted so durnation bad down in Car'liny," he declared, "dat dey coats wuz ez red ez poke-berry juice wid de bleed dat had soaked thru!"

"Dan," said his mistress, "I've half a mind to give you the gad. You're as bad as the field-hands over there at the chapel."

"Slike ez not," said Dan, humbly.

"Come! Don't bat your eyes at me! What are they doing?"

"Dey's burryin' Satan,—dat's wat dey's er-doin'!" replied Dan, solemnly. "Dey's got 'im down kerswash, en Ike's er hollerin' fer de Lawd ter come holp him git de debble unner groun'."

"Don't try to thimblorig me, Dan," said Betsey. "Is Griff there? Are the swamp niggers there?"

Dan fell on his knees.

"Bango, missus! Hit are des so," he said. "All dem swamp niggers is dar; en dey're whusprin' 'mongst deir-selves 'bout de sign up dar in de sky! I'd tole yo' afo', but I wuz afeared dey'd git shet o' me wid er broad-axe!"

Neither Belle nor Elizabeth obeyed Betsey when she told them to go indoors, but followed her as she passed down through the quarters towards the meeting-house. In the quarters' nursery sat old Hester, caretaker of the children. Her skirts were over her head. Around her were a great number of pickaninnies, their frightened eyes peeping out from under blue drilling aprons.

"Dan," commanded Betsey, pausing at Hester's door, "fetch a burning stick!"

Dan picked out a pine-knot from Hester's kindling, lit it, and followed his mistress up-hill to the chapel grove.



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The hundreds of black people ceased to pray and sing as Betsey approached. But Roaring Ike still stood at his pulpit top, which was a tree-stump in the grove.

"Get down from there!" said Betsey; "go to the blacksmith shop, and tell the blacksmith to put a ring in your nose. If you will bellow like a bull, you shall be ringed like a bull."

Then, seeing Dan approach with the firebrand, she added: "Set the meeting-house ablaze! I'll give these ninnies something to look at besides the sun!"

The black people came crowding 'round her and a cry went up.

"Dear mother," said Belle, "I beg you not to burn the chapel."

"Thrust in the stick, Dan," commanded Betsey.

Dan was shaking. So Betsey herself held the brand to the weather-boarding. The little chapel was but a tinder-box and soon scorched the branches of the spreading trees above.

Betsey, with her whip in air, followed the crowd of blacks as they swayed back from the burning church. "Griff! Griff! come here!" she called.

Griff was the overseer of the gang of wood-choppers. He was a giant—sooty black, sullen, the bearer of many scars.

"Strip!" said Betsey. "You've been hatching a plot to rise! You've been down into Southampton! Oh, I know it all; and now I'm going to rawhide you till you squeal! It isn't the sun that's to blame! It's *you*!"

Griff took off his shirt. His shoulders were for brawn the peer of the shoulders of a Samson.

Betsey laid on. When a strapping maid at Oaks of Saul she had beaten out grain with a flail; yet never had she lashed wheat as she now lashed her wood-chopper.

The blue of the sun seen through the smoke had deep-

THE SPOTTED SUN

ened into a smudge and there was an uncanny light upon the scene. Belle and Elizabeth and Dan, hurrying towards the house, looked back at the hill in terror.

Suddenly Griff, in the midst of the lashing, pointed up at the sun, whereat great rage seized Betsey. She drew back to let fall her fiercest blow. But that instant she gave a cry and went over with a stroke, as though God's hand had smitten her.

The black people raised their mistress from where she had fallen and bore her to the house and up into her chamber.

Betsey lay in a stupor for many hours. Then she revived, looking about her. She motioned for Belle and Elizabeth, and when they had knelt at her bedside Charlotte lifted her hands for her and placed them on their heads,—Elizabeth's dark curls mingling with the gold of the McRaes. Even in the hand that had clasped the whip, Belle felt the caress of deepest love.

Charlotte watched Betsey's eyes. Charlotte was sure they rested oftenest upon a peach which lay on a stand at the foot of the bed. She took up the peach and split it evenly with a twist of the fingers. Betsey nodded approvingly.

"Half er all yo' got's er-gwine ter Mis' Belle Wo'tley. Hain't dat w'at yo' mean?" asked Charlotte, who long since had learned to read her mistress's eyes.

Betsey nodded "Yes."

"En de udder half 'longs ter Mis' Lizzie Sproule. Hain't dat so?"

Again Betsey nodded "Yes."

Then, at a sign, Charlotte brought writing material. First there was a letter to Jack Archinel, at Carlisle Barracks. Elizabeth wrote this letter at the dictation of Betsey's eyes, Charlotte interpreting.

"It is my wish," ran the letter, "that my daughter, Belle, shall be married to you, her betrothed, before my

THE ISSUE

death, now impending ; therefore, I summons you to come to us in all haste."

Next was a letter to Le Butt, at the Greenbrier Springs. He was to come in urgency to marry Elizabeth.

Finally was a letter to Dr. Eubanks, at Ballast Creek, in Matthews County ; he was to come in haste for a settlement of the Wortley account with the shipbuilding firm of Eubanks & Sproule.

These things done, Betsey dismissed all save Charlotte. A rider had gone on a twenty-mile run for the nearest physician, but the stricken woman had little hope of help from him. One thing certain, she was bound to live till her work was finished. She estimated the time it would take for her letters to carry, and her three men to come. The black people had dispersed. She was sure there would be no rising on the Nottoway. So towards evening she lay peacefully, looking into the great mirror, which reflected the garden and the cabins beyond.

Charlotte knelt by the bed. Betsey put her hand on the old woman's kerchief.

"En yo'se er-gwine ter die?" said Charlotte, in a soft, cooing tone, full of sweetness, sympathy, wonder. Death for herself, as she had often thought, meant a going-away from her cabin and her chickens and her flowers and a shutting off of the sun, which she loved ; but death for ole Miss,—that seemed something so different. She? Why, ole Miss was one of the pillars that propped up the world.

Betsey raised her hand and pointed to the mirror. Charlotte looked. Betsey could see Dan's image. Dan was in the graveyard corner of the garden. He stealthily went up to the old vine-clad brick wall and looked over. He glanced at Colonel Wortley's grave and then measured with his eye the space in the brier patch where the new trench was to be dug.

Betsey's jaws worked.



THE SPOTTED SUN

"D-a-n!" she mumbled.

"Dan!" cried Charlotte, down the stairs.

"Dan!" called Belle.

Dan turned, looked up at his mistress's window, rubbed his back where the rawhide was wont to fall, and glided towards the house with the motion of a dog that licks the ground.



Chapter II

NAT, OF CROSS KEYS

BETSEY'S GRIFF was under a spell cast by Nat, the Prophet of Cross Keys. Nat had not his like anywhere. He was born near the spot where a Dutch ship set ashore the first blacks brought to America. If Noah's Ark had sprung a leak! If this Dutchman had but sunk! At three, Nat spoke of happenings before he was born. He had heard the plantation bell toll for General Washington; which, in his mother's belief, was a clear case of black magic, for she was then carrying him. Rolling half-naked in the ashes, the impish Nat picked up red coals and vowed the Bad Man could not burn him. He found angels in the bubbles when the pot boiled. He read, untaught, at six; "I kno'd all dat afo'!" he would say, clapping to the book-covers. Gunpowder he made off-hand. Once he heard a mocking-bird sing a song jubiling over Judas under the tortures of hell-fire. Then, as a man he spent long weeks in the woods,—whistling back at the whippoorwills, gazing at the stars, or searching among the high-piled clouds of summer for a token or a gift. Before his eyes in the sky, Gabriel with his host battled against Satan; and Nat put his finger on blood-splotted blades of corn in the fields above which the legions had contended.

His fame spread. The black people believed that he talked lip-to-ear with God in the piney deeps at night. In the dark of the moon, said they, he watched the spirits of the red men as they sharpened their tomahawks in the old graveyards of the Nottoways and Nansemonds.

NAT, OF CROSS KEYS

And now this Nat—undersized; with skin the color of parched coffee; receding forehead and projecting chin; thin wool, jet black and kinky; alert eyes, showing pious whites; flat-nosed; thick-lipped—this miracle-working preacher Nat spun out a web, with many far-reaching, invisible strands. His aim was to make the world the black man's world. He had spoken by whisper with many picked conspirators in the region of the James, the Chowan, and the Roanoke. Throughout all that southeastern part of Virginia, populous with blacks, where the plantation lands run into swamps, the swamps into sands, and sands into the sea, secret word had been sent: "Be ready for the rising; wait the sign!"

At daybreak on Panic Saturday, Nat lay in a coverture of boughs on the Nansemond side of the Great Dismal. Considering the fact that a thousand fugitive slaves lurked in the Great Dismal, one might have thought Nat a runaway. But his master had hired him to the Juniper Water Man; and, rather than sleep in the camp shack with the other negroes of the gang, Nat had made himself a bed at a dry spot in a spongy cedar bog, with open water on one side and a wilderness of vines, bamboo briers, and myrtle on the other. Above him hemlocks towered skyward in a tangle of verdure.

A nuthatch began to scold down at Nat.

"Ak-ak-ak!" said the nuthatch, its white breast swelling.

Nat was awake, though he seemed asleep. In one hand he held a wad of green leaves, plucked at random as he prayed. These he fingered impatiently. He was waiting for the light to strengthen, so that he might study them one by one. He believed that he could read the leaves as a man reads a book; but there were so many leaves in the Great Dismal—ah, so many of them within the compass of its stupendous forests! Yet God knew each leaf from another; and God would give a sign.

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Not on leaves alone did Nat search for this sign. It was his practice to study beetle-marks in the bark of the pine; maple blotches; cedar galls; mystic tunnels cut in wood; the extraordinary mazes of the hickory-borer; worm scrawls on the head-boards of old graves,—all these had Nat long tried to decipher and draw holiness from.

Just now, as it happened, the air was thick with mist. Oceanward the light came in, not like a flood, but like a creeping thing. So Nat lay still—eyes open, ears open. Why might not God speak to him through the fish-hawks as they heralded the morning from the bald cypress tops? Or perhaps other sounds would bring him the word he wished to hear. Why not? In the reeds the herons were stalking. The whooping cranes were up. There were cries, there were dronings—deep, mysterious, almost supernatural. Out of the cripples where the didippers nested came a soft puling, not unmusical, as of mother birds talking to their young.

Listening to all these sounds, picking out the music from the clamor, attentive lest a pregnant note escape him, Nat all at once became aware of a break in the general chorus. The clatter ceased; silence fell. It was as if some mysterious messenger had come of a sudden and put a hush upon things.

He brushed aside the boughs and sprang to his feet. He glanced overhead. The sky had a look such as he had never seen before,—misty, full of strange green tints and circles. His eyes searched the brush-heaps, the junipers, the alders. Then he parted the bushes and gazed across the still waters towards the sun. Wonder of wonder! Could it be? Yes; God indeed was speaking!

Nat fell upon his knees. His body shook. His eyelids opened and shut, as in a spasm. He beat his breast. Then he gave forth a cry. So wild, so shrill, so like the utterance of a thing possessed was Nat's cry that all the winged creatures broke away through the forest tangle.

NAT, OF CROSS KEYS

“ ‘ Kill,’ saith the Lord God ; ‘ kill ! ’ ”

That was the burden of Nat’s deliverance, looking upon the sign of the green sun, and those were his words.

At once he quit the cedar bog, and, bounding from tussock to tussock, sped towards the camp of the Juniper Water Man.

The Juniper Water Man was something of a heaven-send to the black people in those parts. Who he was, whence he had come, why he did not choose to talk of his past, were matters of slight concern among the swamp negroes. They did not even know his name. To them he was “ Mass’r,” or “ Buckra,” or just “ de Juniper Water Boss.” Besides, the credentials in his eyes were too well written to go unread by any one. Some sunbeam tipped in liquid hazel had done the work. There is no doubt whatever that a strange child, in need of a friend, would have snuggled up without question to the Juniper Water Man.

But was ever a creature so full of schemes ! That proclaimed him a Yankee. Just now he was carried away with his project to supply ships with juniper water. He was bound to make money, he said. One dear to him had sacrificed much for his sake, and the loss must be made good.

A gossip might have found something romantic back of this declaration ; especially as the young wife of the Juniper Water Man, with her babe on her knee, was teaching in the little log school-house at Cross Keys, thirty miles to the west. She was a sweet-faced woman, —very strange to the Virginians, with her “ thees” and “ thous,” and in manners as gracious as could be. A Quakeress of high station, a poor young New Englander, an opposed love-match, a runaway,—so far gossip might have ventured with respect to the pair.

In any event, the money-maker was sanguine enough as to the future. There was no water like juniper water

THE ISSUE

for a long voyage. All other water was as bilge. You could sail to the East Indies and back and the juniper water would be as good at the finish as at the start. And here in the Great Dismal were millions of casks of it, and cedar enough to barrel every drop. The sunny-faced young Yankee meant what he said. He was going to establish depôts of supply at every great port in the world. Why, the humanity of it, aside from the money in it, was enough to make a man feel good all over and all the time. Think of the sorrowful stuff poor Jack had been drinking on every sea these hundreds of years; and then of this fine water, palatably acrid and of the tint of Madeira! Also it was a tonic in itself, such as no doctor possibly could devise.

It was hard upon the Juniper Water Man to be parted from that sweetheart wife of his; yet he was really enjoying his swamp life. Birds to him were like gems to an Oriental. His portfolio bulged with plants collected during his Sunday explorations in the fairy kingdoms of the swamp. Some of the wild men in the far recesses had told him rare secrets. Altogether he was getting along very well; but of course he would be happier when the first barge-load of casks, filled to the bungs with juniper water, should pass down the Sweet Gum to the swamp canal and thence to the markets of a waiting world.

As he emerged from his cabin on the morning of the green sun the Juniper Water Man looked with pride upon his saw-mill, his cooper-shop, and his corded staves, ready now for hooping.

But instantly he realized that matters were amiss. His timber-cart oxen were still unyoked. His mules were kicking and squealing in their pound. By the cooper-shop stood his negroes grouped around San Domingo Zeke. He was a sailor from the West Indies, this snuff-colored monster with rings in his ears, but he could lift a log into chains without touching a cant-hook, and knew

NAT, OF CROSS KEYS

more about water-casks than any man ashore. So the Juniper Water Man had hired him out of the black scum at the Five Points in Norfolk.

To dissipate the fears of his men, "Buckra" put on a gay air. Secretly he wondered at the prodigy in the heavens; but he told them about halos and sun-dogs, and pooh-poohed the green sun. He had mixed a pot of green paint for use on a skiff; and now he got out his brush and daubed a miniature of the sun on the end of a juniper water cask. He knew the negroes were watching him, so he whistled his jolliest as he plied the brush.

Nat came bounding through the cane-brake at the edge of the clearing.

"Hello, Nat!" called the Juniper Water Man; "come here a minute and tell me what you think of my big green gooseberry. I'm going to get a trade-mark out of that solar circus up there. I'll stencil the old chap with a big burst of rays on every cask of juniper water that goes out of the swamp. How about it, Nat? Don't you think the Lord's on our side?"

"God works through the sun in a million ways," said Nat, solemnly. "Rise up, white man!"

"Buckra" did not turn his head. But in a flash there came over him a terrible premonition. Steadying himself, he cried out cheerily:

"Now, there's gospel for you! Now you're talking, Nat. You've hit it big. You're a philosopher. I'm going to take you up North with me and get you to preach in the great churches. It's mainly through the sun that God works His wonders!"

"Rise up, white man!" repeated Nat.

The Juniper Water Man got upon his feet and faced about. All in an instant horror sprang into his eyes. The negroes, with their axes, were gathering about him. Next to Nat stood San Domingo Zeke. His arm was going through certain quick, circling, plunging motions. In

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striking air with his dirk he uttered each time an explosive "Psitt! psitt!" half hiss, half imprecation.

"What's all this, Nat?" asked the Juniper Water Man. "You don't blame me for this trouble in the sky, do you?"

"It's the sign," said Nat. "God has spoken!"

"Nonsense, Nat," protested the Juniper Water Man. "You must be out of your head, Nat Turner. Some mad dog has bit you. Don't you remember the day it rained in big drops, and you saw yourself in a thousand bubbles as we two stood by the creek? Don't you remember you said God must be giving you a sign, because He had painted you in so many bubbles at once? And don't you remember I showed you how wrong you were by stepping up alongside of you? My image appeared then side by side with yours in every one of the thousand bubbles. And if Zeke, or Pete, or Shard, or any or all of my hands had stepped up, every image would have popped into the bubbles. It wasn't a sign from God, though you really thought it was; and no more is this strange sun a sign."

"God sent for us both," said Nat; "that's why both of us got inside the rain bubbles. God meant that you'd be the first white man to die!"

"Oh, no, no!" cried the Juniper Water Man. "You're crazy, Nat Turner!"

Nat turned to San Domingo Zeke.

"Kill him!" said he; "the gate of mercy is shut!"

"Me no truckle ter 'Buckra' no mo'," said Zeke, springing forward.

But before he could swing his dirk or utter his staccato "Psitt! psitt!" his eyes were full of paint; and the Juniper Water Man was bounding towards his cabin.

It was in his mind, as he ran, to outstrip the negroes far enough to enable him to snatch up his musket from behind the cabin-door; but he fell short of his purpose. Then he tried to pick up an axe. The helve left the head. For a moment it seemed to him that Nat must be right

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about the bubbles. God surely was against him. But he plunged through the cane-brake and came out upon a winding path, along which he sped. He did not look behind. He was fiend-followed. He knew that well enough. He even knew who was closest at his heels. It was the swift-runner, Pete. Perhaps he could surprise Pete, and secure an axe. By a quick stop and quicker turn he tripped the headlong negro, who plunged into the ooze at the side of the path and sank out of sight. But Pete's axe went with him.

Next following was Zeke. The Juniper Water Man's imagination painted quick and vivid pictures. In one was his sweetheart wife. In another was a giant bubble,—not Nat's rain bubble, but a vast swelling, iridescent bubble, now about to burst—his own juniper water bubble. But the most vivid picture was San Domingo Zeke—rings in his ears; green-faced, like that horrible sun; dirk uplifted. Oh, if the poor Juniper Water Man's legs and lungs would only work as his mind was working! But he was already out of breath. No, not quite. For here was a leap to take, and he would take it. They would run him down on the path, he must make a plunge through the swamp. Just off the path was a tussock rising out of a water-hole. He would try for it; perhaps he could reach it; maybe Zeke would fail and fall, neck-deep, in the intervening slime.

Up through the air went the Juniper Water Man, and he came down flat-footed upon the tussock; but on top of him, as he landed, fell San Domingo Zeke.

"Me kill de debble onct! Me kill yo'!" said the mulatto. "Leggo, 'Buckra'!"

"Buckra" held fast. He had Zeke by the dagger wrist, and his hand was working towards the weapon.

The two were in full grapple. The tussock was slippery; but the very soles of their feet were in elastic and powerful prehension. Every muscle was alive, indeed;

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and thus they clung and strained,—twisting, constricting, crushing, till the blood ran out of their mouths.

Slowly the hand of the Juniper Water Man swallowed the hand of the mulatto.

Nat, on the path with his men, saw this, and hurled an axe; but the axe struck a cypress beyond the tussock and fell with a “chug” into the water.

Zeke made much more of a splash.

He went in, and under, and that was the last of him; and the last of his dirk, for it was sheathed within his very bones.

The bonnie Juniper Water Man sank down upon the tussock.

A log was swung out from the path. Nat was on the free end of the log, axe uplifted.

“Shut your eyes!” said he.

The Juniper Water Man shut his eyes—forever and ever; and the negroes buried him in the juniper water, roping him down with grape vines to a sunken cypress-tree.

Nor did Nat fail to search for a commendatory sign among the bubbles that came up. They were black bubbles—these, and each mirrored a green sun, verging towards blue.



Chapter III

“BANGO, BREDDERN!”

NAT led the way back to camp, and thence to a spot called God's Tussock. This was his tabernacle. It was a circular space walled in with vine-covered hemlocks and roofed by their tops, which met in a majestic dome that grudgingly let in the light—sifting it and softening it to the finest cathedral tone. Under foot was a carpet of moss which came caressingly up when trodden upon. Here Nat, like a church-bell on a holyday, let loose the swinging end of his tongue.

“Bango, breddern! God ans'er'd Gideon, son of Joash, the Abiezrite; God ans'ers me! Whet yo' axes; sharpen yo' knives; slay as Gideon slew!”

The great rising, he announced, was to be at midnight on the fourth Sunday in August. He would seize the Juniper Water Man's horses and mules, and every one must start at once to tell trusty friends in Nansemond, Surrey, and Isle of Wight, who would pass the word from plantation to plantation till it should reach the far ocean where the sun went down.

“Bango, breddern! Whet yo' axes; sharpen yo' knives; slay as Gideon slew!”

The wave of death was to spread from the Nottoway east, west, north, and south. There was a river that ran far to the west. It was called the Mississippi. On its banks were many white mansions, and back of them the world was thick-dotted with the cabins of slaves. There was to be no stop even there.

“Bango, breddern! Whet yo' axes! Slay as Gideon slew!”

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There was a river to the North, and he had heard it called the Potomac. There was to be no stop there. All the whites this side the ocean and the other must die. Out with the race; God in heaven was black like a black man.

“Bango, breddern! Slay as Gideon slew!”

Nat began his thuggery between Sunday midnight and Monday dawn. This was the twenty-second of August. Nat struck; Hark struck; Will struck. Hark was a Caliban with an egg-shaped growth on his temple. Will was a giant with an ugly scar-slash from his right ear to the tip of his chin. As between Will and Hark, each with his broadaxe, it was a question which outdid the other in ferocity. Perhaps Nelse was more monstrous than either. They first slew, then ransacked. All were mounted on stolen horses. At first seven rode together, then fifteen, then forty, then sixty. They pressed forward with hoot and halloo; and to hear them or see them was to see or hear a Satanic thing. The roads were too narrow for them. They leaped the fences. If a horse broke a leg there was a better in the next stable. Corn was in silk, cotton ripening, wheat-fields in stubble. Peach-tree branches were breaking with fruit, and many stills were running with trickling brandy streams. They stopped at the stills for thirst's sake, growing more and more inflamed till they were wilder than the red men who descended upon Wyoming.

It is forbidden the tale to follow Nat closely as he ravaged down towards the school-house where taught the wife of the Juniper Water Man. His path was unlike a tornado's in that he did not destroy houses and shade-trees and the beasts of the field. All these the blacks would want. But the people Nat destroyed. Families were blotted out. Women and children were the chief sufferers. Some escaped, as by a miracle. Crouching in a cuddy, up under the jump of her roof, a mother shel-

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tered her children while Nat searched the garret with eyes she never forgot. Another leaped into a well and stood chin-deep in water, fearful lest some demoniacal black face should come between her and what was left of heaven's light. For some it seemed better to die than to live,—for, living, they would be haunted on many a still midnight with their memory of the looks of these sons of evil.

But men and boys and even girls got away and clung to the manes of their horses as they rode breakneck through the countryside, hallooing their alarums whenever they sped past a house, or saw a farmer afield, or beheld any beggar abroad with a white skin.

"Bango, breddern! Whet yo' axes! Slay as Gideon slew!"

By ill chance no courier preceded Nat on the school-house road. The teacher, unaware of her widowhood, suckled her babe, sang the rosy mite asleep, and tapped her bell. In trooped the children from their mid-morning play.

"Maine, Augusta; New Hamp-shur, Con-cord; Vermont, Mont-pelier." The sing-song class in geography was up. A soft south breeze came in at the windows. The air smelled of wild roses and all sorts of unnamed fragrances from the blooms in the branch, and there was that abroad which put it into the heart of a Southside mocking-bird to sing even on an August morning with the sun mounting hot and high.

"Little Black Eyes" preferred the mocking-bird's song to the sing-song of the capitals; and when the Juniper Water Man's widow rebuked him for inattention, he ran up to her and hugged her, and then stood off and butted her like a calf.

And now! But the thing as it happened need not be told. It would be a pity to tell it—this excessively sorrowful and hideous thing.



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“Bango, breddern! Whet yo’ axes! Slay as Gideon slew!”

Nat picked up the baby, who did not cry at all but looked at him in wonder.

By this time Nat’s men had gone outside, and were drawing water from the school well,—for brandy had not quenched their thirst.

“Nits breed lice!” said Nat, as he looked at the child. But for the first time he hesitated in his killing. A great preacher-thought had come to him. No one but Nat would have had the thought.

As he pondered, something caused him to prick up his ears. He went to the school-house door and commanded silence. Then he returned to the middle of the school-room and listened. He was sure he had heard a sob—a child’s sob! It could not have come from those who were on the floor.

“Nits breed lice!” said Nat, vengefully, again looking at the baby.

But once more his great preacher-thought! He was too proud of that thought to permit him to make an end of the baby.

So he went to the chimney-place and glanced up the flue.

“Little Black Eyes” was there; but Nat failed to see him.

Nat shook the iron cross-bar in the fireplace till the soot powdered down. But “Little Black Eyes” kept as still as the black bricks. He had played hide-and-seek before.

Nat peered behind all the shattered desks and under all the broken benches. Then he climbed a ladder set in the wall, lifted a trap-door in the floor of the loft and burned the dark of a long uninspected spot with the fire of his terrible eyes. A nest of flying squirrels quit the place and floated out from the interstices of the weather-



"BANGO, BREDDERN!"

boarding to the great white oak which shaded the playground.

"Um!" said Nat.

He had satisfied himself that the sound he had heard was not from the unchoked white throat of some one hiding from his vengeance.

But "Little Black Eyes" was still in the chimney-place when Nat came down. Yes, he had sobbed once. He had struggled hard against the deliverance of that sob. It was thinking of the teacher that had caused it. He loved the teacher, and he loved the baby. But he would sob no more while Nat was by,—no, not if his breast should tear apart!

Finally, "Little Black Eyes" permitted himself to sob again—at sounds of the ravening re-begun, the cries, the curses, the thumping hoofs on the Cross Keys Road.



Chapter IV

UNC' EPH AND UNC' EPH'S MASTER

OF the three men sent for by Betsey Whortley, Le Butt was first to get word. He swore mildly. To drink his last Greenbrier julep; to whisper his last piazza whisper in the charm of the evening with the sickle in the west; to forego midnight cards,—these things went against the young man's grain, which, on the whole, was a smooth grain and polished. Yet the elegant Le Butt, so pale at his noon breakfast and so red when his valet Tom pulled off his boots at daybreak, kept a clear brain on the main issue. He was aware of his great good luck in winning a bride from Burnt Ordinary. So he set out from the Springs in his coach, with a cavalier escort; and the young gentlemen halted for juleps wherever a mint-patch and an old lord of a planter invited.

Jack Archinel did not travel in such state. With biscuits, soap, towels, razor, fresh linen, and a new uniform packed in his saddle-bags, he rode out alone from Carlisle Barracks on his southward march. Jack was his horse's humble servant: talked to him, whistled for him, fed him, watered him, rubbed him down. Together they spun off their fifty miles a day. As for Belle, Jack saw her in the flowers, in the blue haze of the mountain-tops, in the constellations. Merry Jack hardly laughed a dozen laughs the whole way down. He was sad because he knew Belle must be sad. He loved Betsey, because Betsey was Belle's mother. He loved even Beersheby Dan, because Dan was Belle's old "Daddy Dan." In a thicket-screened pool of the Nottoway on Monday, the 22d, the soldier bridegroom took a dip, put on his best blue, shaved by aid of

UNC' EPH AND UNC' EPH'S MASTER

his water mirror, shook back his long hair, which was of a glinty brown, and rode up to the house. And, just as he reached it, a dust cloud from Le Butt's cavalcade began to rise in a wafting breeze above the far-away plantation gate.

At that moment the third man, Eubanks, with his body-servant, was two hours out from Jerusalem Court-house, on the Cross Keys Road. Already the dew was off the vines; the pink flowers of the partridge-pea were drooping; the petals of the wild potato blossoms were shrivelling and folding like fairy parasols. So, chirruping smartly now, that they might lie by at noon, the two men moved at a pushing gait,—Eubanks on his blood bay filly; Unc' Eph in rear on a chestnut mare.

Under an August sun in Virginia, with the sand-heaps simmering and some bull-bat in a thicket tantalizing a dry world with mock thunder, the high stock is better in the pocket than around the neck; so Dr. Eubanks rode bare-chested, with his bandanna conveniently encircling the pommel of his saddle, against which jingled his fob and seal. Straight-backed, broad-shouldered, big-bodied—few men when mounted looked so tall as he. Only in Eph's presence was he dwarfed; for Eph, then forty and at his lustiest, was hulking big. Even Griff could not have held up so heavy a world as this mahogany-hued, clear-eyed, firm-jawed Eph.

"Marse John," he said, as their horses, coming to a sandy stretch of road, slackened pace, "dese critters ob our'n got ober a tacky tad er yeth dat clip. Des kine o' retch 'roun', please, suh, en squish dat hoss-fly nigh up ter yo' off saddle-bag."

"Marse" was slow to do Eph's bidding. He ducked his head to pass under a pine bough, and then yawned a good wide yawn. Eubanks was famous not only as the originator of the African colonization idea, but as "the man who looked like Washington." What a mouth

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Washington must have had! However, Eubanks had not slept for two nights. He knew that his holster pistols held buck and ball, yet something weighed upon his mind. His own saddle-bags, as well as Eph's, were heavy with gold,—seventeen thousand dollars of it; all true yellow, and all for Betsey.

"Diden yo' hyar me, marse, 'bout dat hoss-fly, please, suh?" repeated Eph.

"Lady Belle," said Eubanks, "ought to be able to take care of her own rump."

"I 'low she too perlite, suh; she'd a-breshed hit off long 'go ef she hadden' bin afeared er stingin' yo' on der han' wid 'er tail."

With his palm as a scoop, Eubanks caught the fly. Then he held it, boy-fashion, between thumb and forefinger to hear it sing with its wings. Suddenly he transferred the fly to his left hand, held it out of Eph's sight for an instant, and furtively let it go.

"Marse John," bellowed Eph, "I 'clare ter Moses ef yo' hain't done let dat pleggity hoss-fly buzz off! Hit'll follow us clar ter Burn' Or-nary. Dat man cyarn bear ter kill eben a hoss-fly," he mumbled. "How cum hit, I wunner, his ole Daddy Ned ebber fout erlong wid de Light-Hoss Legion? Marse John, des looky dar whar hit bit yo' filly—de bes' critter yo' ebber own."

"Yes, the very best," said Eubanks; "and I'll thank you to keep her mane combed out better than it is now."

"De witches done dat las' night," said Eph. "Des es soon as I sot eyes on de branch back er de stables whar we fotch up, I sez to myself, sez I: 'Eph, dar's hants up dat branch!' I wuz up fo' sunup dis mawnin', marse, gittin' de tangles out'n Lady Belle's ha'r."

In the act of giving his filly the heel, Eubanks glanced around. Now, indeed, he looked like Washington—brows, eyes, nose, mouth, chin. It was the same brown hair, but thrown back in wavy masses; it was the same

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gray-blue iris, but milder. Yet Eubanks was laughing, and Washington rarely laughed. But once, 'tis said, was the great man ever known to laugh uproariously, and that was at a comic song, wickeder than a fiddle tune.

Betsey was fond of Eubanks. She was disappointed when Belle refused him for Jack Archinel,—handsome Jack, poor as his father's sand-patch, but overflowing with riches of the soul. Really, Betsey should have sent for Sproule, of Eubanks & Sproule, for Sproule was Elizabeth's brother. But Chockley Sproule was not to Betsey's liking.

Having passed Cross Keys, master and man began to pity their horses. Lady Belle was in a lather.

"It's the weight she carries," said Eubanks. "Gold is a back-breaker for man or beast. Here's a cool ford and plenty of shade; and here we'll tarry."

It was, indeed, invitingly cool. A clear stream ran over a pebbly bottom. While Eph fed the horses, Eubanks sat upon a mossy seat, drowsily dabbling his fingers in the stream.

It was quiet this moment—blissfully quiet; the next the air cracked with a hullabaloo.

"Into the bushes with you, Eph Steptoe!" cried Eubanks.

The two men hid with their horses in the thick of the undergrowth.

Hardly were they thus bestowed when Nat's troop rode down into the water.

Lady Belle's forehoofs cut the air above the tops of the laurels; and then, under her master's fondling touch, stood quivering.

Eph's mare put up her ears. "Ef yo' snort," whispered Eph, "hit's good-bye Jane!"

Through peep-holes in the leaf screen they saw Nat's negroes crowd down till they choked the passage at the ford. They were letting their beasts drink. Some of

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them started up the branch towards those in hiding. A little farther and they would have flushed the quarry.

But just then Nat held the babe high above his head and dashed away.

"It's a rising, Eph!" said Eubanks; "the black people hereabouts have turned Mohawks!"

"Ef dey hain't done run rum-crazy," said Eph, "de debble's terwi'ched um. Hit's one er 'tudder. Wha' yo' gwine ter do, marse?"

"Didn't you see the child?"

Eph looked at his master, interpretingly.

"Dat's so, suh," he said. "We 'des gotter git dat baby out'n de trap,—dat's de fus' cat ter skin. Looky hyar, now, Marse John Eubanks: I'se gwine arter dat chile des by myself. I hain't afeared o' dem baller-whackin' niggers. Yo'se gwinter stay hyar by dis branch, tekkin' keer o' de gole, en waitin' fer me."

"Straddle your nag, Eph," interrupted Eubanks; "we've got to wake up for once in our lives. I'd give all I've got in the world for a squadron of old Daddy Ned's troopers in squash-blossom buff!"

They ran their horses only on sandy stretches of road; drew rein at every bend, peered through pine boughs, hid behind the holly. Two miles beyond the ford, the hoof-prints led them out of the main road into a cart-path through the forest.

Suddenly Eubanks lifted his hand. They were at the edge of a clearing in which stood long rows of corded wood and numberless piles of brush, browned and blackened by the sun. Close to the largest of these brush-heaps had gathered the black men. Heat simmered up from the whole surface of the clearing. Little lizards, in rainbow hues, glided in and out between the sticks of cordwood, behind which Eph and his master cautiously made their way.

Nat was speaking. Not since daybreak had he found

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time till now to harangue his followers. Some were tossing jugs about. Others drank from decanters, which sparkled in the sun.

"Bango, breddern! Whet yo' axes; sharpen yo' knives; slay as Gideon slew!"

Nat dwelt upon the goodness of God. He himself was the anointed of God. There were cries: "Nat's aninted!"

And now, announced Nat, there was to be a burnt offering. Had he a child of his own he would burn it. Abraham knew God's wishes. Nat knew them also. God had whispered to him a thousand times. He was sorry he had no son to offer like Abraham's son Isaac, but God would accept the baby instead.

"Fire the bresh!" cried Nat, as he tossed the innocent among the dry boughs.

Eph's horny nails made marks in the flesh of his master's arms.

"G'way from hyar, Marse John Eubanks," he whispered. "Dey'll cotch yo', en kill yo', en cut yo' gizzard out. Rein er-round, en go back."

Stooping to the manes, they had edged behind the shielding cordwood till they were now very near the blacks, dancing and whooping by the sacrificial altar.

"I shall ride them down—the fiends!" said Eubanks.

Suddenly, Eph, standing in his stirrups, dashed out into the open. A thunderous, wild whoop of jubilation found vent at his mouth. "Free! Free! Free!" he cried.

In a moment he was among the negroes—embracing Nat; shouting; clapping his hands; roaring forth a tale of how he had heard of the rising twenty miles away, and had come to join the crusade against their white oppressors.

"Great Jehovah come down ter me in a flood ob light en tole me Nat am de King! NAT AM DE KING!"

Surprised at first, and instinctively impelled to have at

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the interloper with their axes, the negroes stayed their hands, watching the face of Nat. This changed from a scowl to a questioning look and then to a grin of masterful complaisance. Nat accepted the flattering election, proudly swaying his shoulders to and fro, and when the negroes took up the cry, "Nat am de King!" gazed raptly upward, as if expecting a golden crown to float down on the back of a belled buzzard.

"Jine in! jine in!" he cried with his preacher unction; "God set this risin' for the fo'th Sunday in August, and I specs you got word by a swamp runner. You're just in time to see the burnt offerin'!"

Meanwhile flames had begun to crackle among the lower twigs of the brush-heap, and all turned from Eph to witness the sacrifice. The little one lay at the top of the pile as quietly as though in her mother's arms. There was no sign of fright. But for hunger and the blistering heat of the sun she might have slept. As it was, her tiny lips pursed out, nipple searching, and her eyes followed the coils of blue smoke that ascended on either side. A snake, disturbed by the heat, lifted itself upward among the twigs and, gliding to the shelter of her body, embraced her, its black tongue spitting out and darting in as it hissed its curses upon its tormenters.

"Bress Jesus!" cried Eph; "Nat am de King! En dem Holy Scripters—w'at does dey say? Dem Scripters sez: 'Ef de serpent show his haid, bruise dat haid!' Lemme git er tad nigher, breddern! Des en inch closter up! I'se a-gwine ter bruise dat serpent's haid! Hit'll spile de burnt offer'n'! Brudder Nat, des lemme hab a nod, en I'll bruise his haid!"

Nat gave a nod.

Eph hunched his mare into the burning brush. How like lightning he was,—that instant, and thereafter.

And how quick the mare was! It wasn't that she minded the touch of Eph's heels in her flanks—that was

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not it so much as the fact that she knew as well as Eph how to turn thunderbolt upon occasion. She went up and over, just as if a horrified God had lent her a pair of wings; and those wings she used through forest and over fields, Nat's pack following. To save his master, to save the child—these were Eph's aims as he guided his mare onward.

"By doggie!" said he, at last; "Ole Miss Betsey's gole done los', but Eph's goal's done won!"

He had reached the shelter of a vast wilderness. He placed the baby on a bed of moss; then embraced his dripping, foaming, heaving mare.

"Sis' Po!" he cried; "Sis' Po, ole gal, I lub yo' fer dis. Ef dis hyar baby's fokes is daid, I'se er-gwine ter name her arter yo', Sis' Po!"



Chapter V

"LITTLE BLACK EYES"

SIS' PO sprang forward from behind the cordwood, and for the briefest flash Eubanks was down in spirit at Eph's seeming treachery.

He made as if to move out from under cover; but, even as his heels touched the filly in her flanks, his hand at the bridle reins checked the dash. So Lady Belle wheeled in her tracks, trembling under a stress due partly to the note of strangeness in Eph's outcry and partly to the current of tense emotion which passed to her in twitches and pressures from the body of her rider.

Let Eubanks be forgiven. It was the only time he ever doubted Eph—a cruel doubt which shot through his head, indeed, like a musket-slug; entering it when his heel said "go!" and quitting it when his hand said "stay!"

A thousand times had Eubanks lauded the inborn fidelity of black men; yet just now he was looking into an unsuspected depth of the human heart, as into a pit of horrors.

"Trusty Eph Steptoe! Brave heart!" he murmured, bending low upon the back of his filly. She, with her forelegs apart and ears pricked back, squatted behind the cordwood, obedient to her master's slightest touch.

As soon as Eph had led Nat's men away, Eubanks reined Lady Belle into the path by which they had come, revolving in his mind the emergent problems of the insurrection.

Suddenly he cried: "Yes, their leader said it! He said the rising had been set for the fourth Sunday in August! The *fourth*! The *fourth*! He bellowed it! I

"LITTLE BLACK EYES"

tell you, John Eubanks, he roared it out—the *fourth*! And yesterday was the third! This Nat began his devilish work last night! He has made a mistake in a whole week! The ignorant wretch has slipped in his reckoning! It must be that he thought the month came in on Sunday; as a fact it was on a Monday! The fiend has miscounted! And who but the Almighty put it in his head to so miscount? Father, I thank thee! Great God in Heaven, I thank thee, in the name of the innocents! I will make it known from one end of the land to the other that the rising was set for the fourth Sunday of the month! Ride, John Eubanks! Come, Lady Belle! Pick up your heels, girl! Now's the time to show the barb that's in you! Remember, your grandam was old Moll-in-the-Wad!"

Head down, ears back, nostrils distended, Lady Belle took the bit in her teeth; but as she sped she seemed to say in translatable sharp snorts: "Lighten me! Lighten me!"

Eubanks glanced at the heavy saddle-bags. Should he pause at the ford and toss the handicapping gold into some secret deep hole? But, even while he was debating with himself on this point, there was a splash, a splatter, a shower of spray, and Lady Belle passed on beyond the stream.

Looking again at his saddle-bags, Eubanks saw that one of the pockets had been torn by contact with some jagged limb, and that through the rent thus made he was sowing the sandy road with gold. He reached down to stop the outflow; then drew Lady Belle sharply up.

It was not the lost gold that caused Eubanks to come to his sudden halt. He had reached the school-house. In the doorway sat an open-eyed boy, pitifully tongue-fast with bewilderment. He was black with soot, but soot was not so black as his eyes nor his close-clinging curls.

"Poor little fellow!" said Eubanks, dismounting.

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He took the lad by the hand, patted him on the cheek, and otherwise adroitly sought to dispel his terror. Then, pity-smitten at what he saw, he went among the children; holding his head against the heart of each; pressing their little bodies for signs of lingering warmth; placing a fluff of bird's down to their lips, so that if faintest breath there were he might detect it.

Likewise with the teacher when he had come to her, lying there among her girls and boys. She was very beautiful, even now. Those eyes of hers must have been love-lit a thousand times, thought Eubanks.

He had now examined the very last of the prostrate ones. All were past his help. Not since his eyes had first swung in their sockets had he seen a sight so cruel, so hard to look upon, so harrowing. But this was no time to let his emotions master him. He must act.

He questioned "Little Black Eyes" as to how many children had come to school that morning, thinking that if any had escaped he might find them hiding in the thicket a few rods away, or in the still nearer laurel copse. But the boy could not tell him. It would not do to halloo, since that would only add to some chance fugitive's fright. No, he would turn his back upon the heart-breaking spot—he must turn his back upon it. He was stifling. His soul was in revolt.

He tied up the torn bag, and lifted the boy into the saddle. Then, as he himself was in the act of mounting, his ear caught the sound of crackling twigs. Out of the laurel copse came Nat—alone, on foot.

In the chase after Eph, Nat's horse had thrown him. The others had passed on. Nat was chagrined because of the loss of the blue-eyed baby. He saw from afar the school-house chimney and bethought him of the sob he had heard. He would search the school-house again. He must do as Abraham had done. It could not have been the squeaking of the flying squirrels in the loft; the sob

"LITTLE BLACK EYES"

that had sounded was a human sob—a child's sob. "Nits breed lice!" repeated Nat, unctuously, with holy malice.

Nat brought a musket to bear as soon as he had discovered Eubanks, and ran forward with wild halloos; but he took no aim, nor did the unpractised white man use his pistol well.

Thus, with their pieces smoking—neither having been struck—the two stood facing each other, ten paces apart. Nat clubbed his gun.

Eubanks, towering his full six feet, walked towards him.

"Down on your marrow bones, black man!" he commanded.

"That day is past!" answered Nat; "God has strengthened my arm to slay every white that breathes!"

Again he hallooed for his helpers.

"You are less the enemy of the white race than of your own," said Eubanks. "What you have just done will weld the negro's chains so hard and fast that not for many a generation will they be loosened! I, who have long labored to lift up your race, say this to you who at one stroke have undone my work! Down, you blasphemer, lunatic, fiend!"

Eubanks hurled his pistol at Nat; and, taking upon his own chest the mall-like stroke of the negro's gun-butt, seized him in a sudden and furious clinch.

Life was the stake in that struggle.

In and out among the dead, in the sandy road, on the packed earth of the playground, this most vicious of slaves and most humane of masters fought as beasts fight.

On Lady Belle's back, tightly gripping the reins, sat "Little Black Eyes" watching them; yet never so intently that he failed to sweep the country round in search of those terrible men to whom Nat was constantly calling.

By and by the calling ceased; for Eubanks all at once got the negro in a lifting grip, shot him in air, and whirled



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him and hurled him and struck him resoundingly against the earth; so that Nat lay stunned, his body quivering, blood oozing from ears, nostrils, eyes.

As Eph had said, Eubanks could not kill. His sole thought now was to bind Nat and gag him and turn him over to the law. But, while he was tying Nat's arms with Lady Belle's halter, a cry from his little vedette caused him to glance along the road. Down this, pell-mell, came a rout of negroes—rabid to a man.

Eubanks sprang into his saddle, fixed "Little Black Eyes" securely in front of him, grasped the reins, gave Lady Belle his heels, and fled towards Jerusalem Courthouse.




Chapter VI

THE WAIFS

A RED court-house in a sycamore grove, a jail, a tavern, a cluster of white dwellings, and a few score villagers with peace in their hearts—these made up Jerusalem.

Another item—the geese. There were many geese at the county-seat of Southampton. They tracked geometric kites in the sand as they waddled down into the bottom where the Nottoway ran between its strips of pawpaw swamp. At the Jerusalem end of the Cross Keys bridge, about nine o'clock on the morning of Nat's War, these geese fell into a hissing fit. First they hissed a man who was hatless and coatless and whose mule knocked the king gander end over end. Then they hissed an old woman who came in astraddle of an ox. But hiss as they might, all the world was riding breakneck to town; all the world was mad. Thunder on the bridge-planks and bedlam racket in the streets were not to the liking of the staid and seemly geese of Jerusalem; so the king gander trumpeted the way to the river, which they whitened with their down and wrathfully whipped into foam.

The inpouring and the uproar at Jerusalem lasted all day. By noon the town was overrun, by night the fields were filled. Silk touched calico, fustian broadcloth in the host that gathered upon the plain that memorable Monday. Rich planters were there with their swarms of negroes; poor farmers with their all of kith and kin. The halt, the lame, the blind were there; the sick upon their beds; and saddest of all to see were the thousands

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of cowering blacks—fearful lest the white people should wreak vengeance upon them because of their color, fearful lest Nat should break through and single them out for slaughter because of their infidelity to their race.

Eubanks was strangely hailed when he reined in Lady Belle at the court-house door. The filly was dripping. She had not forgotten her kinship to Moll-in-the-Wad. In the crotch of a tree sat a Rip Van Winkle in short clothes and cocked hat. At sight of Eubanks he let off his flint-lock in the air and gave a shrill “hip! hip!”

“Hooray!” he shouted; “I’ll be dodfotched ef thar hain’t Gin’ral Washington! They ’lowed he war dead, but they tole a whopper. Howdy, Gin’ral? You’re jess in the nick o’ time!”

Eubanks took off his hat and bowed right and left. Then he made known who he was, and what had happened to him. Pointing to “Little Black Eyes,” he spoke of the massacre of the school children; whereupon wails went up from listening women and curses from the men. They crowded around Lady Belle and pinched the legs of “Little Black Eyes” till he squirmed and whimpered.

“Whoop fur Gin’ral G’awge!” piped the ancient Continental in the tree.

The crowd cheered Eubanks.

“No, no, my friends!” said he, “you’re mistaken; I’m not General Washington,—rest his soul!”

He dismounted and went into the court-room, where sat an emergency council of judges and squires. In spite of his denial, the story spread through the throng to the farthest field. Some laughed. Many swore they wished they might die if Washington were not back in Virginia, ready to save his people. The panic lessened minute by minute. By and by a bell was rung, and the court-crier announced that things were not so bad as they seemed. The worst was over. Nat had begun the rising a week before the day fixed upon in his own orders. Like a pig

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in a whirlpool, he was bound to hoof his own windpipe. Oyez! oyez! Who would ride relay to Richmond? Who to Raleigh? Who to Norfolk? Word must go on a bee-line to every centre in the South. Many volunteers came elbowing through the crowd. As each rode off, the people made way, and the veteran with the cocked hat uttered some old camp cry of jubilation, ending with a "hip! hip! for Gin'ral G'awge!"

All night there were drumming and fifing at Jerusalem, and all night refugees came in. At times squads of men with torches tramped up, bringing hand-cuffed prisoners. Finally, troops appeared—the Cockades, the State Guards, the Regulars from Norfolk, marching in heavy columns, their muskets shining in the sun. Order had the upper hand once more; but the poor geese had been plucked of their feathers, not one was left in the Nottoway—their very bones had been picked! Hunger was helping to put terror to flight. The tide was turning. The white men of Southampton were hunting for the black Gideon and his warlike host.

It was not for Nat that Eubanks went hunting, but for the parents of "Little Black Eyes" and for Eph. "Little Black Eyes" was still perched upon Lady Belle's neck. Nobody claimed him. At last, near Cross Keys, his father's house was found. Only a hound survived on that plantation—father, mother, brothers, sisters, all were dead. "Little Black Eyes" did not cry when Dr. Eubanks rode away from the place. It was Eubanks who blinked and blew into his bandanna. "Little Black Eyes" was quick to forget.

"Gee-up!" he said to Lady Belle, giving her love-pats on the mane.

"Caw, caw!" he cried to the crows; and laughed an innocent laugh when they flew up out of the corn. He clung to the filly; he clung to Eubanks; and it was clear that tendrils were shooting out from the doctor's heart.

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Certainly, the Cross-Keys waif would not fail of a friend. When Eubanks had stuffed his bandanna into the tail of his coat he stroked the boy's curls, thinking them every whit as purple as the shine on the wings of the crows themselves.

But Eph and the baby were chiefly in the doctor's mind. He scoured the country for Eph. There were times when at sight of a buzzard hovering over a distant woods he would say: "Yes, he's there!" but, though he saw many a distressing sight when thus lured from the roads, he had occasion only to exclaim: "Thank God! It's not Eph Steptoe."

Eph hid for two days and nights in the depths of the forest whither Sis' Po had borne him. Enormous festoons of Spanish moss hung from the thick-topped pines, almost shutting out the light of the sun. At night the moss itself was the only thing visible; and a ghostly thing it was—half luminous, swaying to the slightest breeze, sombre, weird, filling Eph with strange dread. Crackling noises came down along the dim aisles, as if Nat were creeping through the underbrush; and at such times Eph stealthily reconnoitred, ready to mount his mare for further flight. Big-handed though he was, and iron-fingered, Eph softened his touch for Baby Po. Yes, that was to be her name. Eph's mind was made up on that point. He had named Sis' Po herself after the Po River plantation where she had been bred. Eph knew Sis' Po's pedigree as well as he knew his own fingers. Had she not come through old "Marse" John Randolph's Popinjay of the Childers line? Eph could name Sis' Po's sires and dams for generations, away back to the Arab; and he could enumerate all their excellences of speed and bottom and general high breeding. He was glad that Sis' Po had foaled so late the year before; for she was still in milk. In fact that was the reason he had ridden her on this journey—he wished to wean her colt; and

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there that colt was away back in the home pasture at Ballast Creek, and here the mare was giving down her milk for this little blue-eyed girl. Eph was not a praying man; but he thanked God most humbly, on his knees, with the Spanish moss swaying around him, that there was mercy and goodness in the world, and that the baby could live on Sis' Po's milk, and that Sis' Po was kind enough to give it down. Eph found twigs and waterside grass for his mare, but he himself had nothing to eat. His lips were green from the chewing of yeaupan leaves. He talked to Baby Po:

"Doan yo' min' me, honey. I'se des ez well contented ez ole man No'er wuz in de yark. I specks I'se afeared de hants'll cotch me, fur I hain't got no chimbly hyar ter shake er shobel up. But I doan min' kase I'se hungry; I doan min' nuffin' 'ceptin' de hants en 'bout yoah cryin' dat way. Who's yo' bawlin' fur, honey? Is yo' bawlin' fur yo' ma? Is yo' bawlin' fur yo' pa? Is yo' bawlin' kase yo'se afeared dey done got Marse John Eubanks? Hursh up, chile, dem catbirds 'll be a-tinkin' dat yo' is mockin' um! I specks I gotter sing yo' ter sleep lac yo' ma uster:

"De scritch-owl scratch de skarp-yum,
De skarp-yum stung de b'ar,
De b'ar he bus' de bee-hive
But dey wa'nt no honey dar!

"He-ho, wough! Ef Unc' Eph cud run acrost er bee-tree roun' hyar w'at a bellyful he'd put away! He'd hole mo'n er ole crock wid er papah cobber. Hursh, chile! Nat mus' be a-comin' dis minit. Look-a dar at Sis' Po's years!"

Sis Po's ears were up, indeed! The baby's wails had betrayed Eph. He thrust her into the pouch formed by the loose folds of his shirt, and stood ready to mount.

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By this time he saw dark figures gliding from tree to tree. They were surrounding him. He picked out his course for flight—straight towards a briery tangle too thick to break through but not so high that Sis' Po would balk at it.

"Don't stir!" cried some one hidden from Eph's view; "you'll be shot off your horse if you try to get away."

It was Jack Archinel, out with the Dinwiddie Guards, scouting through woods and field eastward from Burnt Ordinary.

Eph knew at once that his captors were white men. He held up the babe so that all could see her.

"Doan yo' 'gin ter shoot!" he bellowed; "doan yo' 'gin ter shoot! I'se Dr. Eubanks's Eph Steptoe!"

When Archinel and the Dinwiddies had heard Eph's tale, there was a great handshaking there in the forest.

Eph went with Archinel in search of the saddle-bags, which he had tossed into a mill-pond. Finding the treasure, they pushed on to Burnt Ordinary. Down by Betsey's mills some hundreds of refugees were encamped; but at the house all was quiet. Belle and Elizabeth made much of the little one; not so Betsey. She was glad to see the gold Eph had brought; she comprehended that Eubanks was on the way. These were the things that interested her now, and the only things. Betsey at that moment was holding on by the last effort of her will. How she clung to her thread-like line of life, loose now upon its reel, while the big black waves set in commotion by Nat swirled around her and drew her down! Not that she wished to longer keep breath in her body for breath's sake. Her thought was that she must do, neatly and in order, her last appointed work. As for the girls, they were off her mind,—they were married. Nested in the middle of her bed,—and a shadow of a thing she seemed in the hollow under the sheet, with a billow of feathers on either side,—she had watched them as they spoke the

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binding words: Archinel with Belle on her right, Le Butt with Elizabeth on her left; and all the time Betsey's eyes had shone like the eyes of some stricken bird. Charlotte, keeping the flies away with a peafowl brush, had noticed this. Charlotte was praying that "ole miss" might last till Dr. Eubanks came.

Charlotte was in Betsey's chamber; Dan was nodding in his hall chair; Eph was out under the oak. Towards sunset, Eph boxed in the corners of his mouth with his hands and announced:

"Yonner come Marse John Eubanks, wid de yudder bag er gole!"

Dan echoed the words, speaking up the stairs:

"Yon cum Moss Yobank wid yudder peck 'o gole!"

Charlotte whispered in Betsey's ear. Betsey gave Charlotte a good-bye look. Her jaws fell, but she died smiling.

"Eph Steptoe," said Dr. Eubanks, when he had consoled and congratulated, "so far as I can make out, this mite you call Po has not a single mortal left to care for her. Even her family name is lost. The fiends absolutely swept away all who knew her people. Like my boy here, Po is ours."

"Yaas, marse," said Eph, "dat's w'y de Lawd put hit inter our haid ter ride by de Crost Keys Road. We'll tek good keer er um, marse; my Sabra, suh, she des ez good er nuss ez enny nigger 'oman in Ferginny; en Missy Mahsy she gwine ter fairly lub dese chillun."

"As for that," replied the master, who had something of a bachelor's caution in the matter of taking on responsibility of the kind, "whether we love these waifs or not, they seem to be ours; either they go with us, or to the poorhouse."

"Whar dey'd git nuffen 'cep'n cole pone, marse."

"Cold pone and misery, Eph Steptoe."

For his part, "Little Black Eyes" was not thinking of cold pone. Le Butt's coach was under the great oak, and

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sunset rays lent it splendor. "Little Black Eyes" fell in love with it. It was a marvel of marvels to him. The silken lining, the glittering buckles, the golden hippogriff in the arms fascinated the boy. The coach was just big enough inside for a mannikin's palace. He wanted to sleep in the coach that night; and the next day, and the next, he spent his time in it and around it.

Le Butt laughed at "Little Black Eyes." He could laugh now, for Betsey was bricked about at the very spot in the garden Dan had ogled; and everything had been settled. Le Butt was to get no gold in hand—spend-thrift that he was!—but he was to take with him to his Martello plantation half of the Burnt Ordinary slaves. He was never to sell them. Betsey had left a list of these black people, and they were gathering themselves together in the clump of pines by the burnt chapel.

As Le Butt and his bride stood by the coach and talked with Eubanks about "Little Black Eyes," they heard mournful sounds coming from the clump of pines. The black people were grieved to leave Burnt Ordinary. They felt a powerful love for the water-holes where the fish bit, the hollows where zip-coon hid, and that special section of the sky which roofed over their little world. They knew the plantation even better than Betsey had known it, for they had gotten closer to the heart of things.

Le Butt wanted to take "Little Black Eyes" with him. He would adopt the boy, he said, and name him Pasque, after the San Domingo Le Butt who had fled to South Carolina.

"The baby is going home with me," said Eubanks to "Little Black Eyes;" "won't you come live with me, too? Or do you want to go with Mr. Le Butt?"

"Little Black Eyes" clung to the coach. Thereafter he was Pasque Le Butt. He rode with the master and mistress at the head of the column as the exiles filed out from the chapel grove. Entering the forest beyond the

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fields, the negroes faced about for a last look. Then they burst into song. They sang of Egypt-land; Griff's voice above the others, Griff's wife fluting a high rantan that lingered long in the air and longer in the memory of those who heard it.

On the Southward road Elizabeth mothered away the wild look in the boy's eyes; his curls lost none of the purple under her caressing hand. Being weary after his long ride, Pasque was not so much impressed with the fact that the barge in which Elizabeth passed from the mainland to Le Butt's Sea Island plantation was lined and cushioned with crimson, just like the coach. Singing melodious rowing songs, twelve black oarsmen landed the bride at the foot of the Martello tower which gave the island its name. The tower was old enough—built in the days of Spanish aggression, and creeping ferns and vines now covered it,—but perhaps the live-oaks around it were a thousand years older. From the top of the tower Elizabeth looked around upon the three-thousand-acre island. It was like a huge cockade and very beautiful,—an outer ring of white beach; then a ring of marshes; another of rice fields; another of palmettos and live-oaks; and, finally, a central sea of billowy white cotton jewelled at the heart with resplendent Martello house and its backing of tabby-built cottages embowered in flowering trees innumerable.

"Enty ee kum t' lib wif yer chillun ebbby-mo', mistus?" asked the maumas at the white mansion that night. The rooms were all lit with candles made of myrtle-berry wax, and the black women in their blue jeans were so gorgeously turbaned as to outbloom the oleanders. From the broad piazza Le Butt showed his wife half a thousand negroes dancing by torchlight; and some millions of fire-flies were making merry, too. Even the Burnt Ordinary blacks who had just crossed from the main were eased of their tribulations as they mingled in the throng, laugh-

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ing among themselves at the quaint dialect, so different from their own.

Scarlet were the lilies on that island and sky-blue the iris bordering the rice dykes; and nothing in the world was so overpoweringly sweet in spring, Le Butt told his bride, as the commingled fragrance of the jessamine, azaleas, and magnolia blooms. With Pasque asleep, they watched the moon come up out of the sea.

"It's a paradise," said Elizabeth; for though devout and critical-minded and quick to take on chill of spirit, she was for once intoxicated.

As for Nat, he lay hid in a pit under a brush-heap for three weeks. All this time was a panic-time. Not only in the Southside did men muster, but in the Upper Tidewater, the Midlands, the mountains. All whites able to bear arms were under arms. Mighty hosts of blacks were said to be marching upon Richmond. An exodus to the North exceeding the exodus from Egypt was said to be in progress. Patrols galloped along every road. Fear and anger were everywhere, and never did rumor clack so free a tongue. As in Virginia so it was in the Carolinas. Planters fled to the cities. Rude stockades were built as rallying-places. Drums were beat in Georgia. In the Gulf States terror seized the people. Nor did an earthquake ever carry quite so far as the shock that Nat set going. Tiny islands in the West Indies felt it. In the streets of far Caracas the rising was talked about. Wherever black people were in bondage in this Western hemisphere Nat's tremor shook the hearts of men.

Eubanks moralized about it. Once more under his bed canopy at Ballast Creek he thought the matter over and over. Would Nat's War stifle the spirit of manumission then native in the South? Alas! he feared it would. It would make the cruel crueller and take away much of the kindness of the kind. It would mean harsher treatment, the lessening of privileges, the multiplication of whips,

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the tightening of every bond and the loosening of the viler passions of men hitherto forced to observe humane laws by the pressure of public opinion.

Eph and Eph's master were witnesses for the Commonwealth at Nat's trial,—for Nat was caught at last. He had left a corner of his pit uncovered, after stealing out at night for corn, and had been pounced upon. It was during this second visit to Jerusalem that Eubanks arranged with the Orphans' Court in the case of Po. Le Butt was there to relieve Virginia of all care of Pasque.

On the day of the multiple hangings, Dan was on the outskirts of the crowd. From where he stood, whip in hand,—he had driven Archinel over from Burnt Ordinary, and was in all his liveried glory of crimson and gold,—he was able to see little save what looked like some far-away scarecrows swinging from the limbs of a giant sycamore. Luckily Eph found Dan, and thus enlightened him:

"Up dar at de co't-house, de Jedge hisse'f linked ahms wid me; en he sez, sez he, 'Come er long! I git yo' er place whar yo' ken see.' En he did—des terhine Nat. I seed right off dat Nat wuz pow'ful upshot. He wuz er skeer'd nigger. Ole ez yo' is, Unc' Dan, yo' ain't nebber lissen ter nuffin lac de roarin' dat riz up from dat oshun er people."

"Beats kingdom cum all holler—it dooes!" interjected Dan, squatting till the tails of his elegant coat dragged in the sand, and looking up like some mummified baboon of Egypt into Eph's face.

"Dem sixteen niggers dat hed des bin swung up," Eph continued, "wuz er swayin' dar at de een's er de ropes; en hit wuz de scroonsomest sight er man ebber seed."

"Beats kingdom cum!" said Dan.

"Lac I say, I wuz standin' clost up terhine Nat, en I sorter whusper inter his year: 'Nat am de king o' all dis multertude!' He dodge lac er duck at er clap er thunder. Den he tu'n roun', en skin dem eyes o' hiss'n. He see me,

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en he say: 'Yo'se de berry one dat upsot de whole risin'; hit wuz yo' dat bus' us up!' De Judge he up en say: 'Dat's so!' en he laff, en slap me on de bac.' Den I say ter Nat: 'Ken yo' die er feelin' sorry fur w'at yo' done?' Dat make him hole his haid down, I tell you'. He say: 'Zif I'd er know'd dar wuz dis many white fokes on de face o' de yea'th I'd nebber er done hit.' He wabe his han' out ober de forty-leven t'ousand. 'But I'se gwine up home,' he sez, pintin' ter de sky. 'Yo'se gwine down dar,' sez I, gibben er stomp; 'fur de debble he come clost up unner de roots ob er tree w'en dar's a-hangin' gwine on up dat yar same tree!'"

"Beats kingdom cum!" said Dan.

"Den de Sh'uff got in er lick. En up he go wid er halleluyer, en down he come wid his neck done broke; en dat wuz de las' er Nat!"



PART II

P O





Chapter VII

OLD THOUSAND ACRES

LITTLE PO was like a bird blown from a nest by a whirlwind. But she fell softly. In one sense, it may be said, she fell among the flowers in the old colonial Eubanks garden, with its pebbled walks, its maze of boxwood borders, and its seedlings from the England of Elizabeth's time. Nor did a cat pounce upon the bird for seven years.

Along with an unblurred picture of this garden in Po's memory was another picture,—that of the interior of the house, where mahogany reflected silver; and silver, polished floors.

It was not a large house,—an early Eubanks had built it of bricks, brought in ballast by tobacco ships trading across the sea,—but massed around it were many buildings, each with its special use and pertinency to the parent hall. Seen from the far Chesapeake, the Eubanks place, harboring its three hundred souls, was a mere gray speck against the dark of the pines; seen from the nearer Moback, sailing in, it was like a little white city.

And there was every kind of happiness at Old Thousand Acres,—dog happiness, colt happiness, human happiness. Everybody sang. It was: "I wan'ter go ter rebben w'en I die," as the black people returned from the fields; and often at midnight, with anchor chains clanking and chugging, "Roll, Jordan, roll!" came floating melodiously along the shore. Even the white men who worked in the shipyard, under the willows, sang to their herring-frog piccolo of spike and sledge and mallet and calking-iron. A benign sun, given to playing with

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wave-crests and clouds; piney tonic in the salt breeze; something the wild birds and orchard birds brought with them; neighbor graces; seclusion from the jostling world,—there were hundreds of reasons why Dr. Eubanks's people sang and whistled and laughed themselves hungry only to hunt their hunger down with fat oysters, red-drum, and canvas-backs and one thing or another so rare in some parts as to be deemed fine food for the elect.

Many of the blacks were bay sailors. Eph himself was not a "kerridge" negro, but a pilot. Stress of storm and shoal and the drive for time had inured them and made men of them. Eubanks never once used the whip. His extreme corrective was a bolus. On one side of his counting-room were shelves thickly covered with jars and bottles. Among them was a big blue bottle filled with a concoction bitterer than gall, more raucous than green persimmons, viler in smell than any odor conceivable even by the sailors who frequented the Baltimore Basin in watermelon time. From this bottle the culprit would be dosed; and the punishment was a hundred-fold more effective than Betsey Wortley's rawhide.

In the opinion of some of the black people these bottles contained the very essence of the mystery of "Marse John's" wisdom. They were sure the phials had something to do with his going to Congress. For, finally, Eubanks went to Congress. But he found himself unable to uncage those economic birds of his which were to sing so blithely over all the land. Mr. Calhoun was quarrying in the Constitution for States' Rights granite, and there was thunder and a scattering of fragments at each explosion. Then, there was Quincy Adams. He was quarrying, too,—hurling stones chipped off the everlasting Right of Petition rock. Fire-eaters were swaggering; Abolitionists stinging. There was a day when all the Southern members marched out of the House in a body—all except Eubanks. It was the First Secession. To the

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Whig from Old Thousand Acres, Washington seemed a place where people were busy sowing seeds of war. One term was enough for him; and when he reached home he astonished everybody by manumitting his three hundred slaves.

It would have puzzled Mr. Garrison and the other Abolitionists if they could have seen the Ballast Creek blacks on the day they were set free. At first they thought that a great calamity had come upon them. Only when Eubanks had assured them that they were not to be banished, but were to live on under his care, did they become reconciled. Not so with the neighboring planters. Twelve of them owned the whole of Matthews County. They were lords of that part of the world, and they felt that Eubanks had insulted them. As for Sproule, of Eubanks & Sproule, he was beside himself.

Unc' Dan had told Eph a great deal about "Marse Chock" Sproule. He was "des er po' Wo'tley;" and "ole Miss" had "sont 'im up Norf ter put larnin' inter he haid." But, after he had begun to practise law down on the North Carolina border, "he des tu'n roun' en show de nat'ral cussedness in 'im." Sproule had taken up some hundreds of negroes, set free by North Carolina Quakers, and had sold them South. He had acted in accordance with accepted rules of thrift; custom had winked at his utilization of "waste property," and the law had sheltered him. But Eph and Unc' Dan agreed that "Marse Chock" was a "mean man."

Eph groaned when he saw Chockley making love to "Miss Mahsy." Marcia had gone to a convent school with Belle and Elizabeth. She was like her brother, except that what was nobility in Dr. Eubanks was simplicity in her. On many a summer evening, side by side with Chockley in a white-winged canoe, when the very spirit of love came down upon the waters, she found perfect happiness. Even Chockley himself softened. For

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a while Love and the Eubanks kindness and the sweetness of the simple life at Old Thousand Acres bade fair to purify him. At that juncture, when he happened to think of what he had done in his first fit of greed, remorse seized him, and he blushed under his beard. Marcia was sure no king ever had a silkier beard, or more graces, or a livelier eye than this lover of hers, whose tongue made music while the little waves lapped the sides of their canoe and the crescent sailed along above the sea of pines.

It was just after their marriage that the manumission occurred. In marrying Marcia, Chockley had intended to marry her bachelor brother's estate, slaves and all. Now he dissolved the partnership and went to the District of Columbia to live; and Marcia's cares, including the care of Po, fell to Sabra.

Everything that ought to grow grew at Old Thousand Acres; just as everything that ought to sing sang. So Po was growing finely. She was at once a waif, with no family ground to stand on, and a princess with all the plantation at her feet. Eubanks himself looked after her a great deal. On many a winter night he made a trotting horse of his slippered foot and rode her to win in the Prince George's races. A drollery of hers pleased him: She put her lips to his ear to tell him a story, and held them there—mute. Eubanks thought of the school-house at Cross Keys. Then, still listening, he began to wonder if she whom he had seen at Cross Keys were mindful in the far spiritland of her innocent below. The heaven he had painted in his mind when a boy was still real to Eubanks—it was away off and up, somewhere beyond the most distant star. He was sure each unblasted soul on earth had the long journey to take; and that, as he reasoned, was why the soul was a something not to be seen. A masterwork was the eye, but the eye was compacted of grossness—a mere mechanism—beside the soul, which must needs be of fine things the finest, since, when once

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freed from clay, it was drawn skyward through space by a power like the power at the Pole which draws the needle's point. When the doctor's reverie broke that night, Po was asleep, her head against his—the firelogs snapping; snow in the chimney; Eph standing by with a hot toddy. Many times after that the great grave man asked the grave little girl to tell him "the silent story." Never in any other way he mused, smiling at his own conceit, could he hear that something which was far, which was faint, which was seraphic.

This would have been all foxfire and foolishness to Sabra if "Marse John" had said anything to her about it. The devil was a horn-and-hoof actuality to Sabra; and heaven she dreaded because she was afraid when she got there her manners would not hold out.

"L'il Miss," she would say to Po, "doan yo' step out dar! Step out'n de doah yo' kem in at!" Aunt Sabra imagined that "Gloster Ben" had sailed over in the night from the River Ware and "put a cungr" on her spring. She was sure she had swallowed a lizard. She begged Po to pray the conjure off. So the little girl knelt by the spring, her pale face and cornsilk hair mirrored in the water, and said all the bedside words she knew. Then Sabra used the gourd again. Well stenciled in Po's memory was Sabra in all her motherliness; and Mammy Sabra's superstitions became inwoven with the woof of her being.

As for the incident of John Tom's Elisha, it was like this: Old Norfolk Bob, bound home from Baltimore in a corn-carrying sloop, beat down the bay through a whole March week of head winds, with nobody but a greenhorn galley boy to mind the jib. John Tom's 'Lish had refused to work the jib. In spite of whacks with a marlinspike he kept his bunk. At the landing Eph took 'Lish in hand and led him to the room where the big blue bottle was kept. While Eph was away in search of "Marse John,"

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Po peered into the bolus room and saw John Tom's 'Lish sitting there, doleful-wise, with salty streaks at each side of his nose. He who has seen a sick mule weep can bring to mind the looks of 'Lish, wobbly-lipped and ashen and woebegone. The marlinspike bruises on his forehead were bloody blue. Pity came into Po's heart. She sidled up to the poor waterman and straddled his knees and put her arms around his neck to tell him her "silent story."

Just then Eubanks reached the doorway. One whiff of the polluted air was enough. He cried out in terror, snatched Po from 'Lish's knee, and packed 'Lish off to the plantation lazaretto in the distant pines. John Tom's 'Lish had the smallpox.

Sabra scrubbed Po's skin till it was scarlet. But the scrubbing did no good. The child was pest-smitten.

Eph gathered up Po, bed and all, and took her to a bayside cabin. Once a day Eubanks visited the cabin and lazaretto, with food and medicine. Eph watched the passing sails and nursed Po. One morning he saw a face at the cabin window. It was a quizzical, leathery face of the color of a withered brown apple on a bare tree in winter—heavy under-jaw, flat nose, sunken eyepits, and tousled wool knotted at the back in witch-plaits. Eph recognized it as Jule's.

"Clar out!" he shouted; "g' way from 'roun' hyar."

Jule was the sweetheart of John Tom's 'Lish. She was a strapping field hand. She knew all the "holts" from much wrestling, and could throw a Samson. She could do this on land that no one else could do, and she could do that on water which would have put a juggler on his mettle. Hard on the inside of her head, she was a hickory stick in bodily toughness—a Jim Crow and an Amazon; a simpleton, yet capable of subtleties; a jade and an angel.

There was a binding love between Jule and Po. Many a time Jule had taken off Po's shoes, so as to kiss her feet.

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On Po's legs were blue spots due to Jule's love pinches. Sabra had thought them witch-marks; but Po herself knew better, and would not tell on her tormenter. Jule bit Po, and made horrible grimaces,—these were Jule's ways of expressing a love that was an anguish.

"Gwan off, yo' black huzzy!" bawled Eph, hurrying out of the cabin and throwing sticks after her, just as he would have done after a dog that had come to steal a bone.

But Jule replied with sharp-edged shells that came whistling past Eph's head. Eph knew that if Jule were of the mind she could clip off the end of his nose, so he slunk back into the cabin. Nor could Dr. Eubanks himself drive her home. She hung about the place, sleeping in the thicket. At dusk she brought wood by the armful, and oysters right out of the water for Eph, and pretty shells and pink pebbles for Po. These she left at the cabin door. Finally, Eph beckoned for Jule. "Come er-long!" said he; "I 'low es hit's er fac', yo' gotter nuss us bofe!"

John Tom's 'Lish died; and Jule buried him, far, far in the pines. Some tens of thousands of crows attended the funeral. Jule talked to them as she dug the grave, and the crows talked back. It was a blustery evening, with streaks of light in the west. It seemed as though not night but circling legions of birds blackened the forest and the heavens above it. There was a continuous thundering of wings. Miles out upon the bay the crows might have been heard "cawing" to Jule, who, for a reason of her own, sought to lure them with honey-sweet words. At last she knocked over the king-crow with her spade, plucked him alive, and bore him in triumph to Eph. Within a month it was clear to everybody that the king-crow charm had worked. Po and Eph and Jule were back at Ballast Creek, and the pest cabins were in ashes.

"Marse Chock" had the bad grace to be sorry when he learned that Po had recovered. He debated the girl's



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heirship bitterly with himself. Marcia's first-born, Johnsey, was clearly the true heir. What if Eubanks had caught the smallpox, as he might have done, and died of it, leaving his fine estate to that outcast and upstart little nobody whose very name had been lost? Rob his children! Well, he would see about it!

Sproule's home was in Georgetown; his office in Washington. His chief business now was pressing the claims of slaveholders against the government. This involved lobbying. He had already put many bills through Congress. Slavery was a beautiful monster which scaled off silver and gold for the man adept in the art of playing upon the passions of the Southern members. Success had been his in defending negro-stealers in the Maryland courts. There was McQueal! He had saved McQueal three times. Ten to one McQueal was at this moment in some Baltimore groggery, telling bystanders what a good lawyer Sproule was when it came to getting a man out of a kidnapping scrape.

Yet when Sproule started for Baltimore to find McQueal a certain monitor that lodged within him put ice into his blood and he shivered at thought of what he was about to do. One's better part dies slowly. Sometimes it is years in dying. God and our mothers give us much that is good. But brandy melted the ice for Chockley and drove the shivers away.

McQueal drank and blew smoke while Sproule talked. Sproule pretended that he wanted McQueal to enlighten him upon certain points relating to the latest negro-stealing case. How would this and that be, under such and such a circumstance. Casually, he spoke of the smallpox at Ballast Creek and told the story of Po. He was a lawyer; therefore it was natural for him to dwell upon the inequity of Po's adoption by Eubanks. Rarely had Chockley been so entertaining to his client. Or so amusing.

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McQueal grinned.

"Oh, now, let up, Mr. Sproule," he said; "give me a chance. You think it's a big world, don't you? But it ain't. It's a little bit of a world. Watch me spile that tale o' yourn. Why, thunderation, man! I jess happen to know that gal's gran'dad. I'm as well acquainted with the old codger as I am with you, and a darn sight better. It's nobody but old Jett—Captain Jett."

"Jett?" said Sproule; "who's Jett?"

"Jett's this gal Po's gran'dad, I tell you. Can't you hear when a man tells you a thing as straight as I've told you that? Old Jett has been grievin' over that lost gal for years; and so's his wife."

"And how do you make it out that this child found at Cross Keys is Jett's granddaughter?" asked Chockley. "Tell me who Jett is."

"Jett? You don't know Jett! Why, there ain't nary a sinner 'twixt this and the Capes but knows Jett; and nary a saint nuther, for he's a mighty pious old rascal,—allers a-grievin' over his lost gran-darter. He's as pious a man as there is in the United States. He's got more religion in him than any ten healthy deacons I ever knew. You see, Mr. Sproule, his darter, Tabitha Ann, ran off with—with——"

"The Juniper Water Man?" interjected Sproule; "you don't mean the Juniper Water Man!"

"That's him," said McQueal, chuckling. "I mustn't let that slip me no more. Groudy was his name; and the last time Jett heard from them they were down in the Great Dismal and having a damned dismal time 'twixt a new baby and the 'skeeters. Git out with ye, for a bustin' big lawyer, Mr. Sproule! Leave little matters to me. That gal's got no business down there at your brother-in-law's. She's in danger—catchin' smallpox and sich like. I'll tell the ole man to-night, and he'll be off after her in his sloop to-morrow mornin'."

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"See here," said Sproule; "you're trotting too fast, McQueal. This is serious business. You've got to be sure this child is Jett's granddaughter."

"Ain't I, though? Jett won't make any miss-lick. He's a 'cute one—pious old Jett. 'Old Piety,' I call him for short. Him and me's great friends. What I'm afraid of is he'll want me to mosey along down the bay with him. When you go so fur down the bay you're apt to run out o' rum, 'less a feller lays in a stock; an' we're both dead broke."

"Captain Jett'll have to go to Jerusalem Court-house and put in a claim for the child," said Sproule.

"Of course, of course. And then? You're a lawyer, Mr. Sproule. You set us right on this."

"Then he'll have to get an order from the Orphans' Court on Dr. Eubanks. But it's very painful to me, sir," sighed Chockley; "very painful, indeed, to talk about the case. I'm sorry I mentioned it. One of those unlucky accidents of conversation, McQueal. As you say, we assume the world's large; whereas it's small. Not for a thousand dollars would I have opened my mouth about the girl if I'd foreseen the drift of things. My brother-in-law will be terribly hurt. He's soft on the child."

McQueal cut a look at Sproule.

"Oh, I suppose he is; and so are you. I can see that. I can see sorer sticking out of you, Mr. Sproule, and more of it will stick out when I ment'on what the Dutchman calls 'oxpenses.'"

"What's that?" cried Sproule, with mock indignation.

"As I say, we're dead broke. Obleege me with a little loan. You made my mouth water when you spoke of a thousand awhile ago. Jess make it two!"

"Two!" said Chockley.

"Two!" repeated McQueal. "That's right, sir. You're lucky I didn't say ten."




Chapter VIII

"OLD PIETY"

WHEN it got to be known at Old Thousand Acres that Po was to be deported, the negroes felt as sorrowful as they would have felt had she died of smallpox. Eph was whipped down in spirit; and a midnight groan from his side of the bed was all too apt to be answered by a moan, or a tight-mouthed, nasal "Oom-hoo!" or a "Lawd hab mussy!" from Sabra's. Eph begged Dr. Eubanks to go to law to keep Po, whether she were theirs or not; but Eubanks rebuked him. Blood kin, Eubanks said, was holy. Once let it be proved that Po was of Jett's blood, then Po was Jett's ward, not his. Sproule cast no visible shadow in the case. It would have been lacking in foxiness on McQueal's part, or Jett's, if either had let slip Sproule's name, since to mention him as an abettor would be to reveal a motive other than the motive of grand-paternal affection, upon which they dwelt so persistently in their talks with Eubanks. So far from suspecting his brother-in-law, Eubanks wrote to Sproule, telling him of Jett's claim and requesting him to go among the Chesapeake boatmen in the Baltimore docks and at the Patapsco anchorages and ascertain what manner of man Jett was. Sproule replied that both he and Marcia had taken the bad news ever so much at heart. Would not Eubanks empower him to fight the little girl's deportation in the courts of Virginia? Why, it was an outrageous proceeding to rob that innocent of the advantages she would have if let alone by her short-sighted relatives, who, at best, were illiterate people, with low ways of living. Un-

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fortunately, he added, he could discover nothing against Jett's character; in fact, Jett, though an ex-slaver, was a sort of tar-and-oakum saint,—for example, he made it a point never to sail his boat on Sundays, even if the wind blew fair,—and Chesapeake watermen invariably spoke of him as "Old Amen."

There was the making of a Quaker in Eubanks. He was his own judge and jury and prosecutor and counsel for the defense. Pacing the floor of his bedchamber between midnight and dawn of a May morning, he held final trial of the case. At breakfast he told Eph they must give up the child.

Eph went to the nearest granary and locked himself in and fell face down in a heap of shelled corn. When he reappeared at the house Eubanks comforted him. "It isn't a bit harder for you than for me," he said; "but I feel that what we're doing is right,—it's a matter of fundamental blood-justice, Eph Steptoe!"

Eph told Po that she still had smallpox, but could get rid of it if she would sail across the bay with two witch-doctors who were coming to cure her. "Er monst'us lie," said he to Sabra; "mighty nigh de bigges' I ebber tole!"

Next morning Jett and McQueal appeared to take away Po and her belongings. Jett's sloop, the "Mefodis," was in fresh white paint, with green at the bulwarks and green deck-houses; and the men in the shipyard admired her as she made fast at the long-wharf by the grist mill. The big tidewater mill-wheel had ceased to turn with the flood tide and had begun to whirl the other way with the ebb; so Captain Jett was in haste to get the child in his clutches and be off. Word of what was about to happen had travelled in and out and everywhere, and the shore was thronged. Black people came in from the far parts of the plantation, and from other plantations, and crowded down to the water's edge. It was just like "Big La'nch" day. Hobbling grannies in head-kerchiefs were there,



"WHO GWINE TER WATCH DAT LI'L GAL FO?"



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measuring snuff-sticks and telling each other all about the pains in their joints as they exchanged garden seeds. There was a constant hubbub till Po appeared, when a hush fell upon the throng. In everybody's heart was great pity for the little girl. Some said it was the snuff they got off their fingers that made them cry; but it was not so at all.

Hand in hand with Sabra, Po came down the meadow path leading from the house. The negroes made way for her, uttering exclamations at the fortitude of the child; and at her beauty, which had not been spoiled in the slightest, for she was unpitted. Eubanks resolutely handed her to Jett, who made a seat for her on a coil of rope upon the sloop's deck. Thus placed, Po looked towards the hundreds on shore, and her lips quivered when they cried: “Bress her heart, de li'l chile!”

Eph stood watching Po. “I ax'd her not ter bawl out,” he said to John Tom, “ner eben whindle; an' she doin' des w'at I tole her. Hit put me in mine ob de way er yearlin' ca'f looks at yo' w'en yo' lif' up de ax ter maul hit on de haid,—de way she look er-settin' dar,—an' I 'clar ter man I des feel lac I'd lac t'lissen ter her bus' out an' beller!”

John Tom was seated on a wharf log. He found it hard to hold back a camp-meeting tune then stirring within him. It was his boy 'Lish who had started the bad luck at Old Thousand Acres. When Eph spoke about the dazed look in Po's eyes John Tom groaned. He began to sway his body from side to side, and clap his hands and improvise in a half-hush, deep and mumbly:

“Who gwine ter watch dat li'l gal Po?
Goo'-bye, li'l gal! goo'-bye!”

Very mournfully came Sabra's response:

“I 'low ez hit's Jesus'll do des so!
Goo'-bye, li'l gal! goo'-bye!”

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John Tom asked another question, this time in higher key:

“Who gwine ter ten’ her crost dat bay?
Goo’-bye, li’l gal! goo’-bye!”

Sabra’s answer rang out:

“De chile dat onst in de manger lay!
Goo’-bye, li’l gal! goo’-bye!”

Then they opened wide their mouths and sang together:

“He walk on de wa’tah, He walk on de lan’,
He hole dat chile in de holler ob His han’.
Goo’-bye, li’l gal! goo’-bye!”

Po, touched by the singing,—for numberless voices took up the refrain,—left the hawser coil and, sinking upon her knees by the sloop’s rail, turned towards her friends on shore a face part of terror, part of anguish. Eubanks snorted into his bandanna vigorously. The sloop was moving slowly away from the shore, thanks to McQueal, who was pushing the bow around so that the jib might catch the breeze.

All at once there was an excited quacking among the ducks in the meadow. Jule had vowed she would swing the broadaxe against the despoilers. She had been locked in the corn-crib. Now she had broken out.

“Hole on dar!” she cried, as the crowd split apart to let her through. “W’areber Li’l Missy gwine, I’s er-gwine, too!”

Eph tried to stop Jule, but Eubanks shouted: “Let her be, Eph Steptoe! She’s an angel dipped in tar. By God, sir,” he added, addressing McQueal, “she’s got to go or we’ll all go! Pole the bow ’round, I say!”

A hundred black men came crowding up, casting their hats aside, elbowing, ejaculating. They would have

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seized the “Mefodis’” and tried to turn her turtle on the spot if Eubanks had given the word.

But Jule did not wait. She plunged into the water and waded out towards the place where Po knelt. Thinking Jule meant to rescue the child, McQueal struck her with an oar. She was up to her chin in water, spluttering and blowing and all the time making for the boat.

“I’s e not er-gwine ter hu’t yo’,” she said to McQueal, persuasively. “I hain’t er-gwine ter chop off yo’ haid wid er ax! Doan yo’ git skeered kase I’m er comin’ ’long wid yo’!”

McQueal dropped his oar, fell back upon his hams, and laughed.

“What d’ye think o’ that, Jett?” he cried. “Ain’t it all-fired funny? That black gal says she ‘Hain’t er-gwine ter hu’t me.’”

Meantime, Po, gripping the rail with one set of fingers, grappled with the other among Jule’s witch-plaits. “Bress her heart, de li’l chile!” said the negroes, as they saw her tugging away for dear life; and, all in one breath, crying and laughing and agonizing and jubilating. Then the jib caught the breeze; the “Mefodis’” swung down stream, and “Goo’-bye, li’l gal! goo’-bye!” again sounded over the water.

Jule sat in the sun on the sloop’s deck amidships to dry herself. Po clung to her, sobbing. Jett was at the tiller; McQueal was still at the jib. From time to time McQueal spat overboard, ogled Jule, slapped his hip, and grinned. He kept his tongue until the “Mefodis’” had begun to scatter sudsy green beads at her bow and to leave astern a lacework carpet of filmy foam, sparkling and bubble-spotted, as though she were a goddess on promenade and her servitors had spread it for her here on the surface of the Chesapeake. All abroad was blue water now, and the breeze sang in the ears.

When out of sight of the Mobjack fisher-boats, Mc-

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Queal uncovered a jug which he handled tantalizingly in Jett's sight; bantering Jule the while.

"'I'se not er-gwine ter hu't yo'," he repeated. "Say, now, Old Amen, you ought'er roll up your peepers an' give thanks! She ain't a-goin' to wipe up the deck with us."

Jett smirked a dumb reply. He lifted an imaginary jug and gurgled in an imaginary swallow. He seemed to the watchful Jule almost as forbidding as McQueal, who certainly was as hard-faced a man as ever sailed the Chesapeake; and since Calvert's day, and Talbot's, and Captain Kidd's, many wicked men have passed in and out between Charles and Henry.

"No, sirree," said McQueal, when he saw Jett's signal of thirst; "not a drop o' lickfer fer you this day, or tomorrow either. It's 'ginst the gospel." Then he winked at Jule, and played off more of his humor upon Jett: "He's the devil hisself, that old codger. Jest you keep an eye skinned his way. He's a mean man, that hymn-snorting old sinner a-settin' back there in the stern. Why, he'll sell ye South! D'ye hear that? I tell ye, he'll sell ye South!"

Jule gave her head a backward, defiant wobble. "No he won't, nudder," she called out. "He dassen't. I'se a free nigger."

McQueal enjoyed this horseplay so much that he kept it up until the sloop had crossed the mid-bay path of the ships. He had come safely out of a ticklish job, so was bound to see the bottom of his jug grow dry. Chancing to think of Eubanks, he lay back against the capstan and turned that extraordinary individual over and over in his mind. Eubanks excited McQueal's scorn. If those old Virginia aristocrats were so pumped up and puffed up with notions of honor and equity and flubdub that one of them would loosen his hold on a ward without going to law over her, what would they not do in the matter

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of surrendering silver, gold, niggers, and the other good things stowed away upon their plantations? He felt that he would like to play pirate along that whole shore from the mouth of the Patuxent down. “A bully pill, that codger Eubanks,” thought he; “I wish I had him where I’ve got his brother-in-law. I’m going to make Lawyer Sproule keep my wallet fat with ‘Ben Hatchers’ for the next ten years.”

But after awhile his bantering and chuckling and moralizing ceased; his leathery eyelids fell, lifted, fell again.

No sooner had McQueal drunk himself to sleep, with his fingers entwined about the handle of the jug, than another enemy assailed Jule. It was hunger. Sabra had supplied Po with many things. There was a little hair-trunk filled with frocks and linen and keepsakes and dolls, and besides there was a box crammed with fried chicken and gingerbread and “lasses hoecake.” So the two dined in the shadow of the galley, with an inquisitive gull flying above them to and fro athwart the mainsail.

While they ate, Jett crept past them. He had lashed the tiller and was going forward.

“She’s a-gittin’ a bit peerter, ain’t she?” he whispered to Jule.

For a grandfather Jett had been singularly inattentive to Po. All along his mind had been upon the jug. Now it was his, if by sleight of hand and sailor craft he could get the end of a hawser up so as to touch the sleeper’s palm. The sloop was thumping instead of riding, for he had set the rudder with jolts in view; and McQueal at a violent lurch would relax his hold a trifle. Jett, on hands and knees, crept up, seized the opportune instant, and inserted the rope. Slowly McQueal’s hand opened to the tickling, and when it closed again was clasping the rope. The jug was Jett’s, and Jett soon tried to play “Grandpa” to Po, for the drink kindled something in his blood and made him pat the little girl on the head and call her

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"sissy" endearingly. Strange sounds issued from his throat, as though he were suppressing a powerful desire to sing. He went below; reappeared with a hymn-book, and seated himself at the tiller. As Jule watched him, Po's future lay heavy upon her mind. A ray of hope came into it when she saw him turn to the hymn-book; doubt and dread when he picked up the jug.



Chapter IX

POOR MR. COUTTS

I'M going to make Lawyer Sproule keep my wallet fat with 'Ben Hatchers' for the next ten years."

McQueal did as he had said he would do; and deep was Sproule's chagrin. What a fool's trick he had played upon himself! What a booby's job it was! To run his hand into the human grab-bag like that! Heavens and earth! How he was being bled! Once he had sent McQueal to the Far West. He had returned, grinning his wickedest grin; and demanding "Ben Hatchers." Again had the scoundrel been packed off to Texas that he might set up as a planter in the Brazos country. He had been in a hundred shooting scrapes—lead could not kill him! He had gone with the troops in an old tub to Vera Cruz—water could not drown him! Back he had come—gambling from New Orleans to Cairo; gambling up the Ohio; gambling with the drovers all the way across the Alleghenies.

At times Sproule's clerk, Mr. Coutts, perched upon his high stool in the Washington office, fancied that Chockley's sour looks over McQueal were intended for him.

Coutts was a stoop-shouldered little man, with an extra slim, condor-like neck, topped by an extra large head. The patty-cake imps whose business it is to pat and dab human dough into shape had pinched him at the chin till there was little left of it; and, at the same time, had given him a crosswise bulge at the brows, under which were eyes that dodged in their orbits. They reminded

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one of mice—those eyes. Let Sproule but give him a cat-like glance, and they straightway flicked to cover, peeping timidly forth from between his winkers. Barely fifty, his skin seemed a mere film of parchment over bones, blue veins, and ropy sinews. Sometime, somehow, something must have made poor Mr. Coutts a slave to Sproule.

The truth is, Coutts was a genius. He was carver, engraver, painter. He had made frontispiece steels for "The Iris," "The Garland," "The Opal," "Friendship's Offerings," "Forget-me-not," and all the gilt-edged annuals. But his bank-note vignettes, compacting delineations of scenes from American history into a space no bigger than a fi'penny bit, were particular gems. He felt thrills of *con amore* joy in depicting the ploughman, the backwoodsman, and the sailor; but especially did he glory in the old do-or-die Continental, with brown bess at trail, pursuing the grenadiers.

The three things that undid him were drink, a kind heart, and a daring imagination. First he designed a Liberty copper. This was used throughout the Union as a pass-coin by runaway negroes. It was good at any station on the thousand branches of the Underground Railway. Then he did something else. It was this something else that got Mr. Coutts into trouble.

Why shouldn't he? Why not engrave a plate in the name of some bogus Western bank and print money to give to black men yearning for freedom? Being in his cups one night, Mr. Coutts engraved the plate. But the next morning he laughed at himself. What! Hezekiah Coutts do a dishonorable thing? Never! He tossed the plate aside, and forgot about it.

One of the Liberty pass-coins fell into Sproule's hands, and he sent McQueal to hunt for the designer. For once in his life McQueal got a shock. He found that Mrs. Coutts was none other than Jett's missing daughter, Tabi-

POOR MR. COUTTS

tha Ann, who had been bereft of her Groudy in a tavern brawl, and was now the aspiring consort of a man of genius.

Sproule was startled when McQueal mentioned the matter.

What a situation! Suppose Marcia or Eubanks or the Jetts themselves should happen to meet Mrs. Coutts?

However, Chockley's ague-shock passed. It developed that Tabitha Ann was ashamed of her origin. She had entertained Senators at her cottage in Little G Street, and hoped to shine in a larger way. If her parents should come knocking at her door she would disown them. This suited McQueal, who at once levied tribute upon Tabitha Ann. Finally the silly woman showed McQueal the counterfeit plate. Then, indeed, was Coutts enslaved. Sproule bought and sold State bank currency. Coutts could detect a bad note in an instant. Therefore it suited Chockley to make poor Mr. Coutts his office drudge. As for Mr. Coutts's art ambition, though not quite dead, it was now a crippled and cowering thing.

"Coutts," spoke up Sproule,—it was near the close of one of the McQueal days,—"stop your coughing. You needn't let on you're sick, so as to get out of going to Frederick County."

"No, sir," answered Mr. Coutts, "I don't intend to; I reckon I caught fresh cold at the 'Squeeze' last night."

"High society, eh? Stairs jammed; ladies tight-laced, with bosoms bare; nigger waiters fetching cakes and coffee. Did you fight your way to the sideboard, or did you meekly hang about the entry awaiting the pleasure of your dame? How was it, Coutts?"

"I stood outside in the snow, sir; and that's what's the matter with me."

"You're henpecked, Coutts; the Frederick trip will do you good. You'd better start to-morrow morning. Don't collect at the Boundary-Stone farm; I'd just as lief fore-

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close on that property as not. It's a good place—not a nigger on it, and hardly a rock. But make the rest pay up."

"Yes, sir," said Coutts, "I'll let your debtors know you'll put the law on 'em if they don't come to time."

"That's right," laughed Sproule, wrapping himself in his shawl and drawing on his gloves; "put the law on 'em!"

He turned as he was about to step into the street.

"Really, Mr. Coutts," he said, "I thought you were chicken-hearted; but you're learning fast. Chicken-heartedness won't do either in business or politics."

"That's so, sir," assented Mr. Coutts. "Last night I overheard one of the big guns say it was you who acquired the Mexican territory for us, California and all."

"Don't wheedle me, Coutts. Don't climb my pantaloons, please; and don't let your tongue run on what I have to do with public affairs."

Coutts stood by the office window and watched Sproule as he got into his bellows-top gig and tucked the buffalo-robe about his legs.

"A terrible man!" thought he; "close-mouthed, as well as close-fisted. Climb his pantaloons, hey? Well, it served me right for trying to flatter him. That fellow at the 'Squeeze' swore Sproule got rich in the Western land 'specs' when everybody else got bit. And he said Sproule had a genius for lobbying and brought on the Mexican War. Think of that! He schemed to pull Texas into the Union because he owned Texas cotton-land, and knew it would be worth more in the Union than out. That's what the fellow said; but it's come into my head here lately that Sproule's in the pro-slavery game for something bigger. He's with the Secesh on the sly, and there's said to be a plot to seize Cuba and the Spanish Main and Mexico and organize a monster slave Confederacy. Lord pity me, that I should ever have fallen into the power of

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such a scoundrel! But I'm worse than he. I'm mean with a different kind of meanness. That's a fact, Ki Coutts! *You* an American!—you! Climb his pantaloons, hey? Why, you're the most contemptible creature that ever breathed. You're the semblance of a man, but there's no manhood in you. There are shackles on your wrists. You're the worst slave this side the Gulf. I spit upon you, Ki Coutts! You shall be scourged with a nest of rattlesnakes tied tail to tail!"

He locked the office door, then took a horsewhip down from its rack. When he said grace at the supper-table in Little G Street that evening there were welts and blue streaks upo. Mr. Coutts's person; but they were invisible to Tabitha Ann.

The Sproule dwelling stood on the Georgetown Heights, with grounds sloping towards the Potomac. Outwardly it was not an imposing edifice, such as was Arlington across the river; but within were all the agencies of comfort and rare housewifery. Sproule himself, in his accretive spirit, had helped to enrich his home; but it was Marcia who had made it a nest and a bower and a snuggery; and it was she who had converted the bleak little park roundabout into a close of evergreens and roses.

Just now snow blanketed the rose-beds. Marcia met her husband as he stamped into the entry. She anticipated much. She knew how numb Chockley's fingers would be; so she unbuckled his shawl and drew off his gloves and led the way to the spot of his hearthstone enthronement where chair and slippers and a steaming toddy awaited him.

"Marcia," he said, "I've just got a letter from Dr. Eubanks. Where do you suppose he's been? Why, up North—'appealing to the reason' of the Abolitionists. Yes, by all that's sane! Their *reason*, mark you, Marcy, when we all know how foolish it is to talk to these fanat-

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ics! He dates his letter Boston. He and old Eph have been there a month on a peace mission to Garrison and Phillips and the whole gang. If this business gets out, your brother'll be the laughing-stock of Washington. And he's coming here—he's coming right to this house, and bespeaks entertainment."

"Won't the boys be glad!" said Marcia.

"Which reminds me," continued Sproule, "there was an enclosure for Johnsey in his uncle's letter. Johnsey got it at the office, and it excited him tremendously. He said it empowered him to bring the biggest men in America together, and he was going to have them to dinner here to-morrow. What he and his uncle are up to I can't fathom, but I half believe Dr. Eubanks is going crazy. He's got enough to make him crazy. And, by the by," he added, blurtily, "it's a good thing your maiden property is all tied up for the benefit of your children. You may thank me for it. We can't touch it. If I myself were about to go up as high as a kite, I wouldn't lay a finger on a copper of it. So you see, Marcy, if John is coming here to ask us to give him a lift, that's out of the question."

"You are always thinking of the boys," said Marcia, adjusting his stock—not persuasively, but through wifely habit.

"Why not?" said Sproule. "What do we live for? People say I'm selfish and mean—I know they say I'm a scrouge and a skinflint; but just tell me—won't you?—whether a man who holds his end up and provides for his own, before and after his death, ain't a better citizen than—well, now, to come down to plain points—your brother? I tell you, Marcy, if John Warren Eubanks lives long enough he'll die as poor as Job's turkey; and he won't have to live many days, either. I don't like to hurt your feelings; but it's got to come out, and I might as well be as flat as a flat-iron about it."

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Marcia hung her head, and sorrow showed in her eyes.

Sproule paused. An unshed tear in his wife irritated him. This Eubanks gentility in Marcia was too soft for a give-and-take world, and the recurring thought that a strain of it had gotten into his boys now further vexed him.

"Marcy!" he exclaimed, "John Warren Eubanks has played the fool ever since that emancipation idea got into his head. When he freed his niggers he knocked the underpinning plumb out from under his political prospects; and he hurt his business as a shipbuilder at the same time. Everybody in the South got down on him—yes, instant! And—it's to his credit I say it—he very properly scorned the milk-and-water friendship of the rascally Northerners. Why, I know it to be a fact that Norfolk merchants refused time and again to charter his packets, just because he freed his niggers. He'd rebuke *them* morally, would he? He'd set *them* an example,—his High and Mightiness,—would he? Well, they'd show him how a Pharisee could get along in Chesapeake waters!"

"He acted from principle," said Marcia, in a low voice, gazing into the fire; "he meant no rebuke to his neighbors. His heart has been open to them. He has loved them. John was brought up among very noble men, who wished to see slavery die; and I know there are many such men in Virginia to-day."

"There you are. That's it. Go on," said Sproule. "You're just as bad as he is. But I know what I'm talking about. Norfolk cut him. Baltimore cut him. Then you remember that South Carolina experience of his when he tried to take the whole State into court because some sheriff or other at one of the ports down there had held his nigger vessel-hands under the laws. I tell you, Marcy, your brother has been a fool—a high-and-mighty fool!"

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"My brother is a conscientious man," persisted Marcia, gently.

"So he is. He put South Carolina live-oak into his bottoms when good Chesapeake white-oak would have answered the purpose at half the cost. He spent months in search of spars when he could have got out good enough sticks in a week. He built vessels to last a hundred years, and sold them as cheap as other men who build them to go to smash in ten. I pointed all this out to him long ago. I told him he was enriching others at the expense of——"

Sproule broke off.

"Whom?" said Marcia. "Chockley, you never intimated to my brother that you expected him to leave his money to our boys!"

"No," said Sproule, doggedly; "but I had it in mind, all the same."

Though Marcia loved her husband, this hurt her; and for the moment she loved him not.

"But your brother will leave nothing," sighed Sproule; "all the more reason, therefore, why I should hold on to my dollars. I know he needs twenty thousand as a stop-gap from ruin, but I won't lend him ten! I won't lend him a cent! He's going up, and it's no use to blink it—let him go!"

"Plague it all, pa!" interrupted Johnsey from the doorway; "what makes you say things against Unc' John?"

Indignation heightened the comeliness of a very handsome and graceful youth. He was trim and slim—taller now than his mother; and his face was a replica of hers.

Sproule laughed. "I'm not abusing your uncle," he said; "I was just remarking to your mother what a Don Quix he is in politics to go tilting at Abolition wind-mills."

"But Unc' John's right," said Johnsey; "it's a crisis. Those men down there at the Capitol have lost their

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senses. There's the wickedest sort of Secesh talk every day. Mr. Coutts says if you'd search the pockets of the Senators and Representatives you'd find three hundred pistols. Unc' John means to make peace if he can, and I say he's right. And now, mother, I hope you will excuse me for a great liberty I've taken. I've invited three Senators to dine with us to-morrow, and they're sure to come."

"But how did you manage it?" cried Sproule.

"Never mind," said Johnsey; "Unc' John used a little magic on them. There isn't a man in America who would have stood out against it."

"Oh," said Marcia, "General Washington's dying admonition—the paper he gave my father! You summoned them in the great man's name."

"Yes," said Johnsey, "to receive General Washington's very last words. Our guests were much surprised and affected when I told them what was to come."



Chapter X

THE SEA PUSS

FIVE o'clock, with table set and dinner ready for the great men; yet no stir to speak of in the Sproule dwelling, except the stir in the kitchen where Mandy was making a kiss-pudding and Nick drilling his aids as to the way they should spring forward at "Marse Chock's" nod and remove the silver covers. Sproule went the rounds of the fireplaces, heaping on hickory. Marcia visited the greenhouse to cut some cloth-of-gold roses.

Six; and the guest-candles still unlit.

However, about this time, by the creep o' the moon along the rows of icicles at the eaves, some hundreds of gala tapers caught up a sparkle unknown to wax and signalled a welcome to the distinguished visitors whom Johnsey was fetching in the Sproule coach,—Mr. Clay, Mr. Webster, Mr. Calhoun.

Mr. Webster, in a huge cloak and high silk topper shiny in the moonlight, started straight for the door; but, be-thinking him of the feebleness of Mr. Calhoun, went back to lend him a hand. Eubanks, bareheaded, reached the spot at the same time.

"Give me your other arm, sir," said Eubanks to the South Carolinian,— "now!"

Mr. Calhoun's long leg, missing the coach step, felt tremblingly for the earth. At last he stood erect, and his cloak hung toga-like about his rack of bones. Tall, gaunt, pallid, with snow-white hair falling to his shoulders, he looked like a ghost in custody as, supported by the two strong men, he passed into the house.

Then came Mr. Clay. He bent over, coughed violently,



FROM THE SPOULE COACH STEPPED MR. CLAY, MR. WEBSTER,
MR. CALHOUN

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and hugged himself in a fur-tipped, fur-lined cape, clutching its folds to his breast. At the threshold he paused and peered for a moment between the hairs that hung down from his brows. Ah, those eyes of his! How much they had seen, and could see! and what hearts they had charmed!

First they picked out Marcia, before whom he made smiling obeisance; next Sproule, to whom he measured forth a handshake—just so much of a handshake, and no more; and, finally, Unc' Eph. To him Mr. Clay lifted a summoning finger.

"Boy," he said,—Eph was nearing sixty,—“fire, and a stiff milk-punch; and you may goose-grease my chest.”

With Mr. Clay in Sproule's easy-chair, sipping his punch, Eph knelt before him. They had the fire and the room to themselves.

“Hist up yo' laig, marster,” said Eph; “I'se sot on bakin' yo' feet. Dat's w'at dey need—er good bakin'!” He pulled off a boot. “I 'low yo'se stompt dis foot o' yourn er passel o' times sence fust yo' 'gun ter lay off de law. En I 'low yo'se shuk hit mo'n onct, er dancin' de Kentucky breakdown wid de fiddlers er scrapin' ‘Misser-sip'-Sawyer,’ er ‘Sugar in de Bowl.’ Yo' hain't got no co'ns, hab yo'?”

“No, thank God!” answered Mr. Clay; “nor bunions. I went barefooted when I was a boy. How do you like the feel of that wool? I wish you could see my big flock of sheep at Ashland!”

Eph was fingering the great man's toes very soothingly. The great man's feet were on the fender, and the great man's eyes were beaming with contentment.

“Marse Ca'hoon he look er'zackly lac er ole lion,” ventured Eph; “en Marse Webster! maybe he hain't got er whole ya'dful er bulldogs in dat jaw er hiss'n!”

Mr. Clay's lips puckered quizzically.

“And what do I look like?” he asked.

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"Lac er man!" exclaimed Eph; "des lac er man! Marse Dan'ul's de bulldog; Marse Ca'hoon's de lion; en ef I wuz t' see yo' yo'sef er peekin' out'n de bushes, 'long-side ob dem yudder two, 'way off somers on er desert isle, I'd say: 'Eph Steptoe, dar's de man, en no mistake!'"

"You're a flatterer, Eph," said Mr. Clay; "if you were goose-greasing the Senator from Massachusetts you'd tell him you saw three faces in the bushes—a lion's, a Kentucky baboon's, and a god's. And the godlike Daniel would like it, too!"

"W'at make Marse Dan'ul so brack?" asked Eph; "hit's de troof, ef I ebber tole hit,—w'en I fust see 'im stick his haid in at de doah I tuk 'im fer er nigger. Yo'se a-mos' es fair in de face es er gal, but Marse Dan'ul's mighty brack."

"I got my bleaching by rule of blood," said Mr. Clay, dipping into his snuff-box; "my mother, rest her soul! was a beautiful woman in her prime. Sixteen children, Eph! And she was full of spirit. Once Colonel Tarleton offered to recompense her for some property he had destroyed, and what did she do but chuck his sack of coins into the fire."

"I 'low she'd er pitched 'im in lacwise ef she'd er got de unnerholt."

"No doubt of it. She was a true patriot. As for Mr. Webster's dark skin, that's patriotic gunpowder, you see. I've heard it said his father, Captain Eb, was an exceedingly swarthy man, and the longer he fought King George the smuttier he got. Mr. Webster's a man all over, Eph. We've had our quarrels. In fact, we three have come together socially to-night for the first time in many years. But Mr. Webster's a man all over. He's a great sea fisherman—can hook anything from a tautog to a shark. He's a great farmer—can swing a plow after a six-ox team. Did you ever hear how he buries his horses? What do you do with your horses when they die?"

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"Drag 'um out inter de ole field. Wha's Marse Webster do wid his daid hosses?"

"Buries them upright," cried Mr. Clay, with admiration; "buries them with all the honors of war, heads high advanced, halters on, ready to prance forward at the sound of Gabriel's trumpet."

Meanwhile, the man who thus evoked his rival's praise as conversing with Sproule. They were at the sideboard, and the brandy decanter was within reach. There was a droop to Mr. Webster's lower right eyelid; on the cheekbone was a brandy-vein which zig-zagged across the white surface like a little red rivulet.

"I couldn't go to your office to ask you a certain question I wish to ask," said Mr. Webster, "because such an attempt on my part would have given the matter undue weight and might have been buzzed about in the lobbies and committee-rooms; but here, in your own house, casually, I may inquire what, in Heaven's name, became of that missing ten thousand dollars of the late President's Secret Service Fund? Did you disburse it? If so, where did it go to? Was it stolen? If so, who stole it?"

"Wist, Senator! not so loud!" cautioned Sproule.

Mr. Webster's voice was far-reaching, orotund. Thunder is a good thing in its place; in a dining-room it rattles the dishes.

"My dear Senator," expostulated Sproule, "don't stoop to look into an old rathole like that when the rats are running. Let us join our friends, that we may go to dinner." Great, indeed, was Sproule on that memorable evening when the giants graced his board. Rarely had he looked so well. His fat face shone; his beard glistened as if polished; his gravity, nay, lordliness, of demeanor was eased by a deference that few courtiers could have taken on. At his right sat Mr. Clay; at his left, Mr. Webster. By his side were Mr. Calhoun and her brother.

Eph glanced from "Marse Chock" to "Miss Mahsy."

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She was in all the elegance of flowing black silk, with broad lace collar and velvet neck-strip caught by some family gem. Cascades of brown ringlets flowed down over each bejewelled ear. She looked a trifle world-weary under the eyes; and, as to her mouth, time had pulled for her that muscle which serves as a puckering string; nevertheless, when her soul came into her face she was a beautiful woman.

Mr. Calhoun thanked Marcia for the cloth-of-gold roses. They were redolent of South Carolina. Then he talked with her of Elizabeth Le Butt, who had sent her the slips; and by and by of the admirable Betsey Wortley. Mr. Clay remembered Betsey for her beauty; Mr. Calhoun for her husbandry.

"There was not a rail out of place on her plantation," said Mr. Calhoun; "not a poverty spot in any visible field. The corn, the cotton, the tobacco, the nibbling sheep, the grazing cattle, tickled the eye beyond measure."

He wheezed as he ended. Some pulmonary foe had made his words come hard. All the imps of Abolitiondom concealed in his breast could hardly have pinched him so cruelly. His face, now lined and seamed, took on an ashen shadow from the mantling of blood. Sure enough, "the Cast Iron Man" wore an iron hue; and his forehead seemed a great square box, bound in iron. Marcia saw that, though the frame was strong, weak flesh filled it in; and she pitied him. He recognized her pity, and thanked her with his eyes—large, dark-blue, brilliant; swinging in sockets that were veritable caverns.

From Betsey to Nat's War, the drift was easy. Hey! What was that? Mr. Calhoun turned an ear, with an emaciated hand behind it, towards Sproule, who had just spoken. What! Eubanks the man who had fought Nat at the school-house? To be sure! To be sure! He had heard it at the time.

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"Let us have your story of the affair, sir," said Mr. Calhoun, peering towards Eubanks over the roses.

Dr. Eubanks complied—he was glad to comply. He saw his opportunity to inform the Senators, by indirection at least, of his lifelong labors in seeking to solve the negro problem. While his listeners ate, Eubanks talked. Keen glances fell upon him. There were moments when he purposely opened his heart that those six eyes might read it. Adroitly he told a vivid tale; and, incidentally, Eph came out of it the hero.

"Eph," said Mr. Clay, looking over his shoulder, "if I'd known this, you shouldn't have pulled off my boots!"

"Dat's all right, suh," answered Eph, with a scrape; "I'se er-gwine ter ack es yo' boo'-jack ebbery time I gits er chanst; en I'se boun' fer ter brag w'arebber I go dat I squoze de fros' out'n Marse Henry Clay's toes fer 'im. Dat I is!"

With the coming of the nuts, Marcia withdrew; and Sproule brought down from the garret a demijohn of Madeira, which he placed in his own chair as a sign that thereafter he and the servants would be out of ear-shot.

At a nod from Eubanks Eph remained to tilt the demijohn and snuff the candles.

It had a history—that Madeira! What ante-bellum Madeira was without it? Mr. Clay took a sip of it; Mr. Calhoun smelt of it; Mr. Webster put out the most eloquent tongue of the age and tasted it. Sea nectar; marine tang; savor of the ship which had fetched it. Mr. Webster was enamored of the ocean. How he liked to lie in bed at Marshfield, when a nor'easter was on, and listen to the rote of the sea, seeking to imitate it deep down in his throat that he might upon occasion introduce the melodious roar into that resounding conch-shell, the chamber of the Senate!

"Gentlemen," spoke up Eubanks, in the tone of one

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with a grave deliverance to make; "when my nephew invoked you hither he put to use this bit of lead."

A queer old battered musket-ball was passed from hand to hand.

"I was ten years old when I came by it. I had been at school in Alexandria, and my father was taking me home for Christmas. Our vessel was tide-bound off Mount Vernon, and we went ashore. Finding that General Washington was ill, my father sent his compliments to Mrs. Washington, and started back to the landing; but a boy came running with word that General Washington wished to see 'Captain Eubanks;' and we were soon at his bedside. He pressed my father's hand, saying, 'You are the last of my comrades I shall see in this world!' 'No, no!' cried my father, grief-struck; and that he might put fresh heart into his old commander, began to talk of times when an enemy that seemed bitterer than death had more than once been beaten off. 'For hours past,' said the general, 'I have been marching with my army up and down the continent. How is it with you, captain? Does your Carolina wound trouble you? I know how you got it.' (It was a rear-guard fight—sunup till sundown—swarms of dragoons backed up by grenadiers and the Light Horse our forlorn hope.) 'I'm ashamed,' said my father, 'that the bullet went in at the back of my neck and came out in my mouth; it should have been the other way.' He pulled the bullet out of his waistcoat pocket and showed it to the general, who by this time was propped up on his pillows. 'No, no!' said he, 'there's no shame in it—there's everlasting honor!' His eyes brightened. 'And I will so certify,' he added. 'Reach me my quill. There is a hollow in the ball. I will write a sentiment, and with a little battering you may enclose it in the lead; and your son, here, and your son's son will have a memento.' 'Write a message to posterity, general!' said my father. 'Yes, that would be more prac-

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tical,' replied General Washington. 'I am not without concern for the future of our country.' Then it was agreed that what he wrote should be brought out only in a crisis. I will now produce the slips of paper, jealously guarded by my father and passed on to me. That there are three of them accounts for the number of our guests. Each of you, if you please, will read one aloud."

Eubanks handed the first slip to Mr. Calhoun, who adjusted his glasses, and, after Eph's snuffers had clicked, read with hollow-voiced delivery as follows:

"'Be cautious of all those who, under any pretence whatever, admonish you that you can be happy under a dissolution of the Union. This is my admonition, even though it be to men as yet unborn.'"

"Here is yours, Senator," said Eubanks, unfolding the next wad and passing it to Mr. Clay, whose huskiness was barely apparent—thanks to Eph's goose-grease:

"'Hold on fast by that Constitution which is the only security for the liberty that cost me and my associates a seven years' war of fire and blood. This is my wish, made solemnly, as one nearing the awful presence of Almighty God.'"

It was Mr. Webster's turn. He read slowly, sonorously, tolling forth the words like so many strokes of a cathedral bell:

"'In a crisis, Captains, let these things go by the board,—your prejudices; your ambitions; and, if need be, yourselves; but save the ship we have builded, which is the Ship of State. This is my prayer to you and my command; and I call upon my Maker that He may put it into your hearts to hearken and obey.'"

Eph says that, like the lessening and lingering of a bell's sound when it ceases to ring, the sound of Mr. Web-

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ster's voice seemed to lessen and linger and pass into silence.

A moment of solemnity followed. Of the three statesmen one was dying; the others approaching death. The dying man was first to speak.

"Perhaps you, sir," said Mr. Calhoun, inclining his head towards Eubanks, "may extricate the country from the difficulty in which you conceive it to be placed."

There was affability in his tone; but also querulousness, rebukefulness, irony. Eubanks flushed as he replied:

"It is true I have a plan of settlement, and I pray God, gentlemen, you may think well of it. I have written it out for each of you."

Mr. Clay folded the foolscap sheet Eubanks gave him and thrust it into his coat-tail pocket.

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Webster, "I'll look over your paper, I promise you. I'll grind it as fine as a pinch of snuff."

Mr. Calhoun let his copy lie untouched by the cloth-of-gold roses.

"What is your plan—in brief?" he asked.

"Let the general government issue interest-bearing bonds; buy the slaves; free them; put them under economic tutelage. Let the public domain be set aside for the maintenance of the fund. Let the tariff, which builds up the North and cripples the South, pour its tribute into the fund. Then, in time, with factories in the North, the South freed of its incubus, the unequal tariff lifted—without a slave, without a debt, without a single cause for sectional animosity, the country will be happy!"

"But the cost of this emancipation by purchase!" cried Mr. Clay; "the cost! The very idea is staggering! It would cost untold millions!"

"So would civil war," said Eubanks; "hundreds of

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millions in money, hundreds of thousands of lives! I am urging you to an act of economy, mercy, statesmanship. I submit, Senators, much is to be said in behalf of this plan of adjustment."

"It is impracticable."

"It is unconstitutional."

"It is abominable."

So spoke the three in the order thus set down—Clay, Webster, Calhoun. And the South Carolinian's face again took on its cast of ashy-blue as he muttered, "This is a hornbook proceeding. A musket-ball, some passages that smack of the Farewell Address, and a preposterous suggestion. Does the man think us in our dotage?"

Practically, Eubanks had asked him to set on fire the temple he had been forty years a-building. He turned in his chair slowly till he faced Eph Steptoe, bowed with mock deference, and said:

"An' it please the court, a ruling. Does the honorable high bench sustain the contention of Dr. Eubanks?"

Eph made a deprecatory motion. He realized that he was about to be used as a diversion from his master.

"Now, Marse Ca'hoon!" he protested, as he seized the tongs to turn the back-log. "W'at make yo' call me er bench? Please, suh, yo' doan ax de grinstone w'at's been nicked fer co'n ter turn roun' en grine wheat. I doan know nuffin wuff op'nen my jaws erbout. How yo' specs er nigger ter 'splain ter yo' w'at w'ite fokes cyarn eben unnerstan'?"

"None of us has in him as much as he thinks, each of us has more," persisted Mr. Calhoun; "robe yourself, sit high, oblige us who stand below."

"Heartily, good man, heartily," said Mr. Webster; "you've seen as much of the world in your way as I have in mine. I've seen only a strip of it, and my sight's been like small Jack-o'-the-Pool's—dim and watery."

"Yes," agreed Mr. Clay, "all of us are denied knowl-

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edge except as it comes in squints of light. Go on, Eph, speak out. Say your say. Can we bring to pass what your master wishes?"

"No, suh," said Eph, advancing, tongs in hand; "I'æ bleeed ter ax Marse John ter lemme disergree wid 'im. Hit cyarn be fotch erbout noway. How kin it? How yo' spec' all dem es dot de lan' ober, en all de yudders ob 'um w'at jam deirse'fs inter de big towns, t'lissen ter er mortul man lac my marster w'en dey won't eben lissen ter de Heb'nly Marster Hisse'f? But 'coase I doan kno' nuffin. I doan kno' no mo'n dem split-foot geese w'at I hyar tell erbout."

"Split-foot geese!" exclaimed Mr. Clay; "what about the split-foot geese?"

"Marse Ca'hoon he run me out'n de room wid er poker ef I tell dat tale."

"No," said Mr. Calhoun; "go on with it. I could hardly lift a poker, much less whack you with it."

"Den I'se er-gwine ter tek de 'vantage o' yo' en open up; but 'tain't nuffin ob er tale nohow. Hit's des erbout er passel o' geese dat libed down our way. Dar wuz a monst'us flock ob'um, en dey gotter qua'lin' 'mung deirse'fs. Der wuz ole ganders, and der wuz young ganders, en de flock split. Yo' see, suh, de ole ganders tu'n Secesh, fer de oler a gander gits de less sense he got. Hit wuz 'greed 'mungst 'um dat de Secesh mout flock by deirse'fs ef dey fust fixed up er 'sputed pint. Dey wuz ter do dis by wipin' deir feet on de sharp aidge ob en ax. Wha's de use er talkin'? Dat erzackly w'at de Secesh geese done. Dey went ter de chicken block in de woo'-pile en wipe deir feet twict on de aidge er de ax. Dat split deir webs fer um. Bimeby dey hyar de ole 'ooman wat owned 'um callin': 'Goosey! Goosey!' from crost de ribber, en dey see her scatterin' co'n on de sho'. De geese wid de web feet wuz er swimmin' crost es fas' es dey cud paddle, so de split-foot geese dey made er dash fer de ribber.

THE SEA PUSS

But dey couldn' swim er lick. Dey couldn' git ober ter de oder sho' no way; en es de tide wuz runnin' lac er mill-race, dey wuz carried down stream en out ter sea, en dat wuz de las' er de split-foot geese. Hit sho'ly wuz."

As Eph ended, the smile that had been playing in Mr. Clay's eyes made perceptible quick progress down either side of his nose, lingered for a second in the corners of his mouth, then drew his lips lengthwise as one draws out a rubber band. He had a quaint mouth, Mr. Clay. There was a Celt's name somewhere on the fly-sheet of his ancestral Bible. As for Mr. Webster's smile, it was on the part of his face away from Mr. Calhoun; not on the nearer half. Yet Mr. Calhoun himself was amused.

"What a lot of everyday Æsops we breed in the South!" said he to Mr. Webster. "This homely fable falls some thousand fathoms short of your speech of the 26th of January in behalf of the indivisible Union; but it's cunning, sir,—very cunning."

Tongs in one hand and in the other a turkey-wing hearth-duster, Eph stood unsatisfied. He had thrown a quoit and grazed the stake; now he wished to ring it.

"Marsters," said he in a hushed voice, impressively; "onct I seed de Sea Puss!"

"Hey!" "What?" "How?" said the Senators. By this time their backs were towards Eubanks.

"Hit wuz des off de Sow's Tits w'en I wuz follern' de sea fer Marse John. En ef I 'member, dar wuz erbout twenty-odd vessels in de fleet, en we wuz all struck by er kine er calm, wid skasely es much win' on de face o' de ocean es I'se er blowin' out'n me now. En, marsters, arter hit come dark I felt sumpfin ketch holt ob us. Hit cotch us hard; hit cotch right holt o' de keel en' 'gin ter pull us erlong 'dout us seein' nuffin. Skeered, marsters? Corse I wuz. I skin my eyes ober de rail ter see w'at I didn' wanter see, en sho' nuff I seed hit. Sez I ter de cappen, 'Cappen, de Sea Puss hab got us sartain es hell!'

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Wid dat he sung out, ' Pilot, I'se a-fear'd de Sea Puss got us foul! ' Den de pilot sez, sez he, ' Ef dat's so, Moses come down! Moses come down! hit's all up! I cyarn do nuffin fer yo'; I cyarn do yo' no good! ' En den de cappen he tuk up er ho'n en gib er toot ober ter de nex' vessel, en frum dar dey tooted ter de nex', en frum dat 'un t' de nex'; en all ob 'um sont word back ef de Sea Puss'd got er holt on dat yar passel o' ships, nuffin 'ceptin' de Power w'at work His ways from up aloft 'ginst de Debble cud keep 'um off'n de Sow's Tits."

By this time sweat showed upon Eph's face. Now he stood erect, towering his full six feet, tongs swung ceilingward; again he bent till his turkey-wing swept the carpet.

" Listen, mother," said Johnsey, in the far sitting-room; " that's Unc' Eph a-bellowing so!"

" All de w'ile, marsters, I wuz er scrouchin' down in de bow o' de ole ' Treadwater,' er-peepin' ober at de Sea Puss. De moon, wid some cloud rags acrost her, riz up and crep' erlong de wabes; en I seed de Puss mos' es clar es I done seed de bowsprit. She wuz es brack es pitch 'long her sides, en hams, en back; but her belly, marsters! De belly o' dat Sea Puss wuz w'item de w'ites o' all de niggers' eyes 'twixt hyar en de Texies. En, marsters, hit wuz er tu'nin' en twistin', en de sizz en spew ob hit w'en de ole Sea Puss'd put up her scratchers wuz sumpfin dat made yo' blood freeze tight up en tuk erway yo' breff. De cappen he say ter de pilot, ' Des hyar 'um er-barkin' de keel! ' En ebery time de ole Puss teched her de vessel'd quibber en shake from eend ter eend. By dat time, marsters, de Puss hed tu'k en got us all in 'mungst dem yar Tits, en de seas wuz er breakin' all over us. En, marsters, dat Sea Puss swaller'd us all up, en not er ship got erway; en only dis hyar po' ole nigger yo' see afo' yo' wuz sabed out ob all dem seafarin' people. Yaas, gennermens, de Sea Puss, she et um all up, ebbery

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one o' dem—de pilots too; en I 'specs dat's de way hit's ergwine ter be wid dis hyar fleet ob States yo'se been pilotin' erlong 'tween de rocks en de shoals dese las' fo'ty years er mo'. Dey got in de grip o' de Sea Puss. En ef yo' ax's me de name o' dis hyar Sea Puss's mudder, I'se er-gwine ter up an' tell yo' dat her mudder is Slabery, en her farder is Aberlishun; en she done got yo' sho'!"

Mr. Clay was seized with a fit of coughing. Possibly he was affected by the manner of the black giant, roaring forth his tale of the Sea Puss, rather than by any new thought in the tale itself. Certainly Eph's terrible earnestness was communicated to all present. After Mr. Clay had walked the floor a while and subdued his paroxysm, he began to write at a table in a corner of the room. Mr. Webster leaned back in his chair, his face turned upward, eyelids closed. One could see to the bottoms of his eyepits and count the creases and folds of the broad spread of skin below the cavities. His brow rounded upward like a granite hill. But the eyes opened wide at Mr. Calhoun's first words:

"Last night I dreamt of war!"

"War!"

"War! Yes, war among ourselves. I was here at the Capital. I heard an incessant rumbling of artillery beyond the Potomac. Stop my ears I could not, nor shut my eyes. The clouds I saw were clouds of cannon-smoke; the lightning was powder-lightning. Never on a summer evening have I seen such angry fire run across the heavens."

"It was extraordinary, Senator."

"It was. I myself seemed a shade—a poor trembling shade—seeking my lost cloak hither and yon. But no one knew me. All seemed strangers. All swept past me, hurrying to battle. The city was overrun—innumerable musketmen, cavalry, wagon-trains, processions of wounded. So great was the horror of it that I got me

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out of the way to a spot in the woods where I could take my hands down from about my ears. Dreams are strange. From my covert, a vast plain suddenly opened before me. It was filled with silent, opposing armies. There was multitude upon multitude, composing hosts massed over against each other, and in full panoply. I could not make out where the lines of battle began, nor where they ended. Dreams are 'high fantastical.' From contemplation of these hosts of silent men I turned to watch the pretty play of—what do you suppose? Lightning bugs! One of these flew in at the touch-hole of a cannon. In my agony I tried to stop it, but I was too late! too late! For, then, ah, then, a jar, tumult, blood, death! It was the wounded I pitied. I, a cowering ghost, pitied the multitudinous wounded and passed among them to stay their blood. I was a shade, as I say, and I wore a shroud; but it was no longer white. A woeful nightmare, gentlemen. A woeful nightmare."

"It was prophetic, Senator," said Mr. Clay, solemnly, resuming his seat at the table; "it was a prophetic dream. It is a warning from Almighty God!" He paused. Then, with vehemence, he cried: "We must act, Senators! In Congress, in the Legislatures, wherever our people meet, we have each other by the throats. Twenty furnaces are at this moment in full blast at twenty capitals. Our friend the doctor is right; the doctor's black man is right. We must act. For my part, I shall submit in the Senate a new Compromise, of which I have but just now drawn the heads. It may throw me out of public life; but what of it? What does it matter? Shall I not go to my grave in peace? Shall I not meet my Maker with bloodless hands? I put aside all hopes of the Presidency. I put the Presidency from me as I do this."

He filliped an orange with his forefinger, and sent it rolling across the table towards Mr. Webster. Was he offering his rival the prize?

THE SEA PUSS

Mr. Webster stood up. As he did so he brought his ponderous fist down upon the table. The blow did not crush the orange, but sent it spinning to the far end of the room.

"I, too, renounce the Presidency!" he said. He faced southward, and pointed in that direction. "Where have my public enemies been? There! They will still be there!" He faced northward. "Where have my friends been? There! They will be there no longer!"

At this he choked. Then the fire of renunciation blazed again. He glanced at the musket-ball.

"Your prejudices, your ambitions, if need be yourselves.' Senators, I obey. I hope to support your compromise, my friend. If it make for the Union,—if it make for peace,—I will stand by it, come what may."

Mr. Clay seized his hand. Thus standing, they looked towards Mr. Calhoun.

The South Carolinian got upon his feet with difficulty and stood tottering by his chair. Eph supported him. He bowed to the two Whigs. He was courteous to the last. Also, in a measure, he was iron to the last; for he said:

"I believe the Constitution to be a beautiful and profound system. I revere it—I love it. The Union of my youth—ah, yes, my friends, I love that. If we could but return to it, I should die singing hymns of praise to Jehovah. But I cannot support your compromise. I will countenance it in the Senate; but I will oppose it. If the gold ring true, I will confess as much; if I suspect a grain of base metal in it, I'll touch it with such acid as a truth-loving God may enable me to secrete. If it shall be adopted, I will acquiesce in it, and urge my friends to so acquiesce."

"You have ten thousand such," said Mr. Webster.

"A hundred thousand!" cried Mr. Clay. "Gentlemen, this is a great night's work. Dr. Eubanks, we thank you. Eph Steptoe, is the coach at the door?"



Chapter XI

THE BETHEL-BOAT

HOME again, Eph chuckled at thought of the part he had played. His boast to Sabra was that he had "discumbobulated de bigges' o' de big."

"I 'low hits so," said Sabra, "dat yo' made en oncommon dunce o' yo'se'f, ef yo' got de chanst."

Sabra welcomed all tidings as to "Miss Mahsy" and the boys and the big candlelight dinner; but she was busy knitting her four pounds of shad-net a day, and when Eph began to talk on affairs of state she cut him short. She was not curious about such affairs; rather was she interested in a plantation tale that old Nat of Cross Keys had risen from the dead and would sweep the world corn-tasselling time. It was, in fact, a spring of omens, rumors, storms. Wreck news came up from Kitty Hawk; there were drownings in the bay; dams burst. The millers, it seems, talked politics and let the floods, rising stealthily by night, catch them foul.

Eph was as bad as the millers. He had a far-seeing eye now; and with it he watched the gathering of the Fugitive Slave tempest. Mr. Clay, offering himself as a buffer between the colliding sections, Eph deemed a hero—"ole big-moufed Marse Harry, wid dat cough o' hisn."

"Marse John," began Eph,—they were in the lamplit office; Eph was rekindling the fire; Dr. Eubanks was unwrapping his copy of the *Congressional Globe*—"fo' yo' 'gins t' read dem debates in de Senate, I want ax yo' er question. How come hit I hain't sorry t' hyar 'bout

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Marse Ca'hoon er gibben up de ghos'? Wha' sorter meanness is hit down dar inside o' me dat leps up fer joy ter larn he's daid?"

"You're mixing your emotions, Eph Steptoe," said Eubanks. "It's not that you're glad Mr. Calhoun's gone. We are natur'ly hungry for news, and when a tale comes we find pleasure in it—shock or no shock."

Eph looked unconvinced.

"For my part," continued Eubanks, "I'm sorry Senator Calhoun is dead; but I'm not grieving over him. Each of us goes when his hour comes. The locofocos can get along without him. What I'm grieving over is the Whig party. I'm afraid it's dying. Dear me! dear me! It's dying, Eph Steptoe, for lack of a soul."

"But yo' cyarn say hit's for lack o' breff," laughed the black man, as Eubanks thumbed the leaves of the *Globe*.

It was torrentuous—that oratory. For a full hour Eubanks, who liked to read to Eph, thundered through it. Actually, something jarred the shelves and made the bolus bottle shake.

Just then the door swung inwards.

"As there's a living God!" cried Eubanks, "here's our Jule!"

"Wid Li'l Miss stropped ter her back!"

"Yes, it's our little Po grown big; and she's drowned!"

Sea-soaked as she was and with drooping jaw, Po, indeed, seemed dead; but when Eph had unlashed her body from Jule's shoulders and had brought her nearer the lamp, Eubanks saw her lips move and her purple-edged eyelids slowly open and shut.

Jule tumbled in a heap on the floor. Lying thus, she pointed triumphantly towards the bottles on the shelves.

In brief, not the jug but the hymn-book had won with Jett; and Po had lived in the wonderful little world of sounds and islands and river-mouths and piney shores and preaching and praying and hymn-singing and glo-

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rious, roaring camp-meetings till she had become steeped in a holiness that must out at her throat. It was all the fault of the celebrated "Parson of the Isles," who managed affairs in those parts and who averred that God had sent Po to the Eastern Shore because she could sing like an angel. He flattered Po, and made her think herself set apart to sing sinners to salvation. She sailed with him a thousand times and sang a thousand, and grew famous. But Jett was put out of meeting for negro-stealing, with McQueal; and Jett tried to make a preacher of Po, rivalling the great Parson—which was against Methodist rules. So Po was beside herself, and at last fell so sick that Jule, thinking of "Marse John's" medicine bottles, stole her away at night and set forth in a canoe from the Eastern for the Western Shore. Head winds, a pouncing storm, and much that was terrible, Jule had encountered; but here she was.

"No, her hain't drowned nudder," she protested; "Marse John, yo'se gotter totch her to wid dem bottles o' yourn up dar."

Eubanks was puzzled. Here was Po with typhoid fever, and Jule had put her to pickle in the Chesapeake Bay; yet good had come out of the wetting—the fever was passing off. Hour by hour she mended. At the end of a week he sent John Tom to Tangier waters with a letter to Captain Jett.

"Your granddaughter is safe," he wrote, "and will soon be up and about. I propose to keep her until she is fully recovered, and would like to keep her forever. In my heart, she is my own child." Jett, he urged, should lay no grudge against Jule for what she had done. Fidelity, love, desperation—these had prompted Jule; and God in His kindness had guided her.

By May Po was blooming again. Dr. Eubanks was at once pleased with her natural graces, and displeased because of her lack of graces non-acquired. The worst

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shock she gave him was in the matter of her speech. Her "passel" and "stiddy" and "gin' out" pained him. He perceived that he had not done the right thing by her. He upbraided himself for his neglect to stipulate that she should be educated just as she would have been had she remained his ward.

"But hain't she gitten putty!" exclaimed Eph.

Po at this time was slim, but not bony; small of head and small-faced, with a fair skin tinged with a color much lacking of rose yet surpassing rose in delicacy. This color, a distinctive beauty-mark with her, was mainly shown in a dash struck downwise athwart each cheek. Her ears, too, were lovely to behold—small and pinchable. But best of all were her eyes, for they had in them a winsomeness bred of something that lived within her. Were they blue, or were they gray, or did they give forth a commingling of many shining hues? Only a lover, perhaps, would ever be able to answer; for thought was quick to change with Po, and as was the shade or tint or burning light of her imagination so were these signals to the world.

"Yes, indeed," said Eubanks, "she's grown into a fine young woman; but I'm afraid she's too religious for her own good."

Eph laid a hand on Dr. Eubanks's sleeve.

"Look er hyar," he said, impressively, "dat's erzackly w'ot I'se been er worrytin' ober. Yassr'ee. Li'l Miss' got amos' too big er Bible cargo on board, er else she's done bin loaded lobsided wid hit. By doggie, Marse, hit 'pears ter me dar's er Bible pizen gits inter fokes."

When for the second time Jett sailed with Po out of Mobjack, it was not in the "Mefodis',"—for the "Mefodis'" was no longer his; but in the "Widder,"—rightly, by register, the "Widow's Sons,"—a swift new pungy, fitted up as a bethel-boat—preacher's stand, mourners' bench, deck seats, and all. To see her across a stretch of

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water was to see a scrap of sunset cloud—for her hull was in flamingo pink.

Jett told Po all about the gospel-boat. He had planned that she should be a waterside evangelist. He would sail with her from port to port, and she should sing and exhort and preach; and by and by she might be able to start a sect of her own; and who knew but that he, Backslider Jett, might win a name as Saint Jett and thus go up to glory!

"Git ready, sissy. We'll be in Baltimore to-morrer, an' I want ye to wake up things on Gafftopsail Corner."

The listening McQueal danced a whirlabout on deck and grinned a leering, sarcastic grin.

"And gran'pa'll take up the collection," he said. "Gran'pa'll git the speshie, an' jug it."

But "Gran'ma" Jett had hopes that "Gran'pa" was eternally done with jugs. "Gran'ma" was lean and worn and trembly and very, very shaky in her hands, as well as twitchy in her neck. She rubbed her gums with snuff, not as a carnal gratification, but for a godly reason.

"I rubs it in," she said, apologetically, to Po, "bekase thet's the only way to ease the torment in my roots an' snags; an' if I don't do it, I kain't think o' nothin' nohow 'cept them."

Po preached from the pungy's deck in Baltimore Basin; but she also went ashore to sing in Strawberry Alley and at Old Lovely Lane and other places; and during these excursions of the bethel-boat gossellers Jule remained on board to watch.

Jule was on her guard against McQueal. She dared not let herself sleep, except as a cat sleeps. Down under hatches, with no light but the light burning green in her own eyes, she would start up at the sound of a scampering rat. So she felt great relief when one day she learned that McQueal had gone on the cars to Washington. He would be away a week. Better still, he might

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return. Bethel-boating was humdrum and profit-

dly were the supper-dishes dry when Jule crept to
d in the pungy's hold. In her sleep she seemed to
the brimstone lake Po had preached about the night
.. The water was black, breaking into thunder-
blues where the waves ran into crests. The sky
elvely black, sparked with points of blue; and the
n that came gliding along the beach towards her
overed with leathery webs, like the webs in the feet
ese—only the devil's webs changed from blue to
and from black to blue as his spirit heaved within
The devil's face changed to McQueal's. He chal-
d Jule to wrestle with his tail, which he swung
ds her, planting its end, spike up, at her side so that
ight seize it. The feel of it as Jule took hold was
hing between the feel of a snake and that of a
's tail when the lathered crupper comes off. The
nt she grappled with the tail she felt herself swung
sand miles to and fro across the sea of fire. Mar-
is was Jule's flight at the end of the devil's tail. But
vil One was in a playful humor. He set her down
ut a corncob in her mouth and enveloped her head
nuff-colored cloud that smelt vilely.

Queal, travelling early, found only Mr. Coutts in
le's office.

take notice yer boss ain't got in from his palashul
said McQueal, lighting a stogie and seating him-
unbidden. "Where's yer spittoon? How's things
ashington? Anybody busted a faro bank lately?
s Mrs. Coutts?"

utts, twisting about on his high stool, replied with
civility to all these questions, save the last. He re-
l that. What had McQueal to do with Tabitha

his man's always showing the low side of his

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nature," thought Mr. Coutts; "and he's got a very low side. He's a natural born throat-cutter. But how much better am I? What a drop I've taken—I who latterly never take a drop! I had ambition, I had zeal, I had skill; and here I am a flat failure, a henpecked man, a no-account man—as inconspicuous in the world as a flea in a coal pile."

Coutts wondered what the secret was of McQueal's hold upon Sproule. Maybe the mysterious entry "Paid X," running back for years in Sproule's private account book, meant "Paid McQueal." Mr. Coutts's ideas came to him pictorially, and he had a nervous habit of expressing himself on scraps of paper; so he now drew a leach on a fat leg, and wrote under the sketch "It's no use to kick!" But Coutts no sooner created than he destroyed: he rolled the bit of paper into a ball, tossed it into his mouth and swallowed it in spite of himself; for of a sudden Sproule entered.

Sproule drew back at sight of his visitor, exclaiming "You here!" There was an unflattering stress on the "you," and McQueal burst into a laugh.

"I rather guess you've hit it," said he. "But I ain't a-goin' to stay long. I've come to borrow a leetle wad o' 'Ben Hatchers.' Kin ye lend 'em to me?"

Sproule's "No" was such a thundering "No" that Coutts jumped off his stool.

Even McQueal was nonplussed. He picked up his hat and started for the street. Then, approaching Sproule he snarled: "Supposin' I fresh up yer mem'ry fur ye Supposin' I if ye a few ifs."

"Get out," interrupted Sproule, "things have changed I'm done with you, sir."

No sooner was the blackmailer gone than Sproule found himself under harassment from a fresh brood of fears. Days before he had heard Marcia say the Jetts must be dead, for Po was back again at her brother's.

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Well, well. If he had gotten news that all the Abolitionists were turning black and growing kinky hair he could not have felt better. Out of the McQueal scrape at last. That scoundrel had given him more trouble than had any other living man. And on top of it all to come upon McQueal, leering, ugly, demanding "Ben Hatchers!" Yet, after the rebuff, Sproule was wretched. McQueal's parting look was enough to make any man shiver.

By nightfall McQueal was back in Baltimore; but it was after nine o'clock when he reappeared on the deck of the "Widow's Sons." At that hour the harbor had fallen into almost as deep a sleep as Jule's. All save one of the bay steamers had gone. With the opening of her furnace door came an illuminating red gleam that put into and took out of one's eye all in an instant a vivid presentment of the land-locked mooring-place—a marine cul de sac, with water smooth as in a bowl, green and bilgy and showing an oily smear; towering warehouses around; at the wharves schooners, tugs, and small craft innumerable. A section of the shore seemed to break away and float outward. It was the steamer, which, hoarsely bespeaking a clear course, began her forward glide towards the harbor mouth.

"Lay low!" said McQueal to two men whose junkboat, laden with peddlers' truck, came rolling in on the steamer's wash and tied up alongside the puny.

McQueal tiptoed to the binnacle and spied down into the cabin. "Gran'ma" Jett and Po were asleep; and "Gran'pa" was wetting a holy thumb as he flicked the leaves of his Bible in search of a good-night chapter.

McQueal summoned him with a rap.

"I mosey'd back in a hurry, didn't I? What brung me? Well, I hearn a piece o' news. I've fotched up with Tabitha Ann?"

"Thet kain't be so noway," said Jett. "Run acrost my Tabither Ann?"

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"Yes; she hangs out in Washington."

Then, after he had told Jett much that was true, and more that was not true, he exclaimed, "If ye don't stop bellerin' an liken'en yerself to old Jacob a-findin' Joseph, I'll pitch ye overboard! An' don't fergit sissy's the same gal Tabitha Ann desarted an' left in a poorhouse."

"I'm a-goin' to rout out Jule, an' hist sail fer Washington," said Jett.

"Take a swig fust," interposed McQueal; "ye're forgotten to celebrate."

He whistled; and his thugs of the junkboat came silently up.

"'Tain't perlite to force a prayin' man," protested Jett.

"Hold his hands for me," said McQueal.

Whereupon each seized an arm, and Jett felt the pressure of a flask at his lips and smelt the effluvium of his tempter.

Sheepishness, bliss, deviltry had each its turn upon Jett's face as he gulped the liquor down.

"The old cuss ain't left a drap," said McQueal. "Now, don't forgit, Pop, when I whisper 'hist,' I want ye to hist."

"Hist whereaway?" asked Jett.

"You know well enough. I've fixed the throat halliards over the hatch. The huzzy run off, didn't she? She'll do it ag'in, won't she? We need money, don't we? Then, what's the use to fool?"

Jett groaned a humbug groan.

"Come on," said McQueal to the bumboaters, as he swung himself down into the hold.

It was not a snuff-colored cloud, but a guano sack, that had come down around Jule's head. Nor had the Evil One gagged her, although gagged she was. And McQueal's arms, instead of the devil's tail, were clasping her.

THE BETHEL-BOAT

Nevertheless, it was hell in the pungy's hold. Except for the sound of winded men breathing hard, thumps against timber, one explosive oath, and a splatter of something that dripped, the battle was noiseless, quite.

Possibly if there had been a mouth-vent for it, Jule's wrath would not have poured through her veins as it did, electrifying her muscles and making of her an ox in strength and a wildcat in ferocity.

Yet she who had swung undaunted on the devil's tail was cunning from the start.

"Git the hatchet away from her," McQueal said to the junkboat men.

Jule heard him through the guano sack, and made much of holding fast to the hatchet. Thus, by strategy she got upon her knees—upon her feet. Instantly then she locked a leg about McQueal and plunged forward. They fell together. Somehow the hatchet-blade split McQueal's jawbone. Somehow a junkboatman began to drip. Somehow Jule's head got up the hatchway. But just then Jett's black-jack descended.

Po was astir when day broke. She called down the hatchway: "Jule! Jule! I'm a-goin' to run up to the market!" and stepped ashore. "Old Mose," the crabman, stood aside for her to pass and scraped effusively, with a "Mawnin' ter yo', missus." Under the marketshed good words were spoken in her ear,—for she was quick to make friends, and the fame of "the pungy gal what preaches so pretty" was spreading. Out of pure happiness, she sang to herself all the way back.

"Ain't Jule up yet?" she asked of "Gran'pa," who sat aft, smoking. "Gran'pa's" eyes were bleary and his tongue lay dead in his mouth.

Po kindled the galley fire. She laughed to think what a march she was stealing on Jule. Then, with breakfast ready, she went below.

Fear smote her as soon as she had run her hands over

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the old straw-filled salt sacks which served as Jule's bed. Her "Jule! Jule!" echoed strangely along the timbers.

Having heard Po's agonized call, Jett's head sank, vulture fashion, between his shoulders. The same cry brought Mrs. Jett out of the cabin.

"Pore sissy!" said Jett; "her black gal's gin' her the slip! Kain't ye find her?" he asked, as Po came towards them.

"Nor high nor low I kain't," she said; "but I'm bound to come up with her, gran'pa. I'm going to get my things on and go ashore and search the whole city for her."

"Don't ye go, sissy," pleaded Jett. "She's fell overboard and got drowned, I reckon."

Po shook her head.

"I hearn uncommon quare noises las' night," said "Gran'ma," giving signs of a return of the "shakes."

"Thet were kaze the President's dead," explained Jett. "Old Zach is gone, an' the people were a-grievin' all night long."

With the air of one who has something of importance to say, he relit his pipe and puffed it, eying Po the while. On each of her cheeks had come a flame-spot, and these were kindling minute by minute.

"I hearn tell another piece of news," continued Jett. "Brither McQueal he got run over by the cars a-goin' to the hospital. But 'tain't all bad I got fer ye, sissy. Yer own ma, our darter Tabither Ann's been fotch up with. She's in Washington, an' we're a-goin' to p'int the 'Widder' fer the Potomac bimeby."

Wonderment came into Po's eyes. For a while she ceased to think of Jule, and saw, as in a vision, this new found dear one. With that quick efflorescence possible in an innocent and reverential mind, she idealized her mother. Soon, however, her thoughts reverted to Jule.

"Gran'pa," she said, "you get somebody to help you

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sail the boat round to Washington, and when I find Jule I'll meet you there."

"Ye're a-gitten' stubborn, an' ye're a-tryin' my temper," said Jett.

"Ye're a-showin' more love fer thet black gal than fer yer own pore ma," protested Mrs. Jett. "Ain't she a-behavin' bad!"

"I love you and gran'pa and everybody," said Po, unashamedly. "I kain't help it if I love Jule best. I'm going to use my eyes and my tongue and my feet. I will not let my steps cease till I've found her. Not a spot on the yearth but I will journey to for to come up with my Jule."

"Never mind, gran'ma," said Jett; "git out yer snuff, an' we'll talk about Tabither. That gal'll be back 'ginst bedtime! She'll git hongry, an' she ain't got a fip in her puss!"




Chapter XII

THE SEA HAWK

JETT was unaware that Eph had taken from shot-bag hoard the brightest of his half-eared and silver pieces, had conjured them by ritual blown breath, and intrusted them to Jule to give to Po.

Thus, while her heart was heavy when she began quest, she also luckily had a heavy purse.

Not ten steps from the pungy's side filial remembrance brought tears. But she did not waver in her purpose and soon fell in with the stream of people in Baltimore Street. She was conscious that she was the object of a thousand glances, and shrank under them. This was the world. This was Babylon. Her clinging brown frock, bonnet brimmed like the new moon, black silk mitts, reticule filled with needful things proclaimed her a half-shore rustic. It did not occur to her that many of the ladies in crinoline who gave her quick, sharp looks and even smiles as they swept by were thinking less of her rusticity than of her freshness and beauty.

Suddenly she stopped. Her heart gave a leap. That at the corner stood a stately old man whom she at first mistook for Dr. Eubanks. In the pride of his buff buckles he seemed a lingering colonial remnant and, herself, was clearly out of place in the throng. She stared at him so undisguisedly that he lifted his hat and dressed her. Soon he knew her story. She must go straight to the Mayor's office, he said, pointing the way. That moment a moustached dandy stopped at the window by which they stood. His raptorial eyes measured her from under a hat set at a sidewise cock over black curls.

THE SEA HAWK

shiny with oil. Though he pretended to be looking at the objects in the window, his attitude was that of an intrusive listener. When the two faced towards him he passed on.

"Be shy of all such sea hawks as that, my dear," whispered the old Colonial. "He's a slaver afloat and a gambler ashore. Did you not observe the wickedness in his face? He'd like nothing better than to snatch you up and sail with you for Mozambique."

But in a little while Po ceased to think of the Sea Hawk. Her mind was occupied with what she saw and heard at the City Hall, and later at the slave jail far out Belair Road. Heat giddiness troubled her, and the dust, and a despair that was worse than the dust,—for nobody knew anything of Jule.

Partly to have a cry out unseen, and partly because her tongue was parched, she turned off Belair Road into a meadow. There was a spring-house in a sycamore grove at the spot where the meadow dipped lowest; and thither she went. The grass cooled her feet; the smell of the mint refreshed her; and the milk! ah, how tempting it looked!—pan upon pan of it arranged on the broad of a well-scrubbed board just over a shallow of purest water. She helped herself to milk, then knelt and prayed.

What could it be but a miracle? Spread upon a tub of butter was a newspaper, and before her eyes were the words: "Lost and Found." God must be helping her, else she never would have thought of advertising for Jule.

"How much reward do you offer?" asked the clerk at the newspaper office that night.

"I'm afeard there's skase enough," said Po, counting out Unc' Eph's coin. "I've got forty dollars here."

"That's so," laughed the clerk; "it's 'skase' enough to turn the purpose of a nigger-stealer. You'd as well offer thirty, and keep the rest."

The clerk told Po what he knew about the various

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slave-dealers; in fact, he even gave her information as to the terrible time the editors were having from Maine to Oregon, now that the President was dead and the Fugitive Slave Law was bound to go through.

So eager was Po that she went at once to the nearest slave-dealer; and then to another, and another; and finally to the Basin, expecting to sleep on board the pungy; but the police had frightened Jett, and the pungy was gone. Still wandering, Po happened upon Hanover Street. On each doorstep, as it seemed, were good people, gossiping. The women were in summer white. Po heard low, sweet voices, and merry, manly voices. This was the real Baltimore, with its neighborliness and gentility. At each doorstep she made known her loss. It was seen how spent she was.

"Come right into my house, you poor child," said one of the elders, "and tell me all about it."

But hardly was Po snug in a big chair before she closed her eyes.

"Yaas, indeedy, ma'am; she am so er decent gal," she heard an "Auntie" say; and in a little while she was in a billowy bed, adrift on pleasant tides.

No one was astir in the house when Po got up; so she pinned to her pillow a slip of paper marked "Luke x. 33," and hurried into the street to buy a copy of the journal in which she had advertised. Yes, there was the advertisement, the very first thing under "Lost and Found." She was so moved by it she would have kissed it if the sausage man, who served her a breakfast right off the fork, had not been looking. Especially did she like the way the word "Reward!" stood out; it put her in mind of the bethel flag at the pungy's peak,—for could not everybody see it?

She began to haunt the newspaper office. The sympathetic night clerk was off duty. Unluckily, about nine o'clock, the Sea Hawk came down the street. At sight

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of Po, standing irresolute at the corner, he circled about and entered the office.

"Say," laughed the day clerk, "she beats the deck. She's a plaster. Been in here more times than I can count. Yes, I'll admit she's as pretty as a peach, but she's a confounded nuisance."

The Sea Hawk winked as he went out. He lifted his hat to Po. "I beg your pardon," said he; "I hear you're in trouble. Would like to offer my services. I've been talking to my friend inside about you, and my sympathies have become enlisted. Very strongly, I assure you. My motives, miss," he added, speaking like an actor, "are most chivalric."

Po gave him a glance as quick as the look of a startled wild bird. She remembered him at once. Heartsickness came upon her. The pith went out of her legs; and she could not say "thank you," as she tried to do, because for the moment she was as in a nightmare. What she did articulate, in a sudden spasm, faintly, was—"Mozambique."

"Hey?" said the Sea Hawk, mystified.

But Po was backing away from him, and somehow she got around a corner out of sight; and then she ran.

"Oh, there's evil in him!" she murmured. "I kain't understand why he's set about it to pester me!"

Towards noon, hoping the Sea Hawk gone, she ventured again into Baltimore Street. There, walking along in his stately way, was the old Colonial. To be sure he'd go with her to the newspaper office.

This time the day clerk was less brusque.

"Here's a message for you," said he; and then, watching her while she read it: "I'll bet any money it's good news you've got!"

"Oh, yes," cried Po; "Jule was seen early this morning in a slave coffle 'tween here and the Relay. Where is the Relay, please, sir?" she asked.

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"Take the twelve o'clock train for Washington," said the clerk. "Stop at the Relay. You'll get there before the coffle does."

But the coffle was an hour out on the turnpike road when Po reached the Relay.

"Endure, my heart," she said, as she gave chase on foot. The sun was hotter than it had been the day before, and the dust beat up in thicker clouds; but Po was less perplexed and in a measure happy, seeing that there was promise of overtaking Jule and that the terrible Sea Hawk was each moment farther and farther off.

Crossing a bridge, she came to a bend in the road. She was searching the new stretch of turnpike with eager eyes when there sounded behind her an ominous thump, quick and loud. Hoofs and wheels on the bridge planks. Whatever was coming must be speeding in a fury. The sound was like a shot, and like a shot it struck Po.

"Mozambique!" she gasped, tearing her way through a hedge and crouching behind it.

The Sea Hawk was cursing his driver as the buggy sped by. Soon it was out of sight. Its dust drifted over the hedge upon Po, who shook her terror off and ran for a wooded slope.

Po now knew that she dared follow the coffle no farther. Nor could she live in the woods. So, after hours of wandering, she approached a house; but the rude appearance of the people caused her to pass along. Beyond the house was a wheat-field, and in this she hid. The glory of the evening passed. The stars came out. How vast was the spread of the arch holding aloft the Lord's Temple! As she looked, her terror lessened and she slept.

Voices, sounding near, awoke her. Men were searching in the wheat. Fright for a time took away her power to move. Those forbidding people she had last seen must have spied upon her, and now they were about to betray

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her. Even her own heart acted as though bent upon betraying her, so loud it sounded in its tempestuous beating. She sprang up and ran out of the field into a road, and then along the road. On ahead was a light. She would go into the house whence the light shone and clasp its master round his knees, and beg him to shield her. But the light was not from a house,—it was from a monster wagon, laden with beeswax. The driver sprang down from his seat.

As his own lantern disclosed, he was a stocky man, with heavy jowls. There was a button-like wart in a rounded cavity of one of his fat cheeks. He touched a spring, and down fell the tailboard of the wagon, revealing a bed of straw in a recess between the false bottom and the true. "Hurry up," said he; "hide here." There was a snap as the tailboard closed upon Po; and the beeswax man climbed back upon his seat.

"Where's the woman who escaped me on this road?" thundered the Sea Hawk, ravening up.

"Woman, did you say?" retorted the driver, as he swung his lantern in the Sea Hawk's face: "I'm not bothering with women, mister. I'm buying beeswax."

"I'm Deputy to the Sheriff of Howard County," lied the Sea Hawk; "and if you saw that girl it's your duty to tell me."

"I'm buying beeswax," persisted the driver.

"Beeswax be damned!" roared the Sea Hawk, passing on.

Meantime, as it seemed, Po could not have kept quieter had she been ceremoniously boxed and sealed in walnut, with a hearse as her coach. Yet who that has put his fingers close about the body of a wild bird but remembers its galloping heart-thumps, pitiful to the hand? So with Po at this moment, face down in straw, listening; until, by and by, she heard the beeswax man chirrup to his horses. There was a jingling of trace-chains—a rum-

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ble, a creak. She ceased now to hold her breath, which became the very breath of thankfulness. Was it not as if God, taking cognizance of the odds against her in the terrifying hide-and-seek game with the Sea Hawk, had sent the man with the wart-button in his cheek to pick her up and put her in his pocket and make off with her? For a pocket it was—this strange compartment under the cakes of beeswax. Luckily she was used to a narrow bed,—her berth in the cabin of the bethel-boat was less wide by half.

"Shr-r-r!" Po heard the brakes cut against the wheels; then the splashing of hoofs in water. The wagon had passed down-hill to a ford. What if the water should creep up, inch by inch, and fill the box encasing her! Yet such a fate, thought she, would be by far less dreadful than the fate she had escaped; for to die innocently was to go to God, but to be a slave to the Sea Hawk might mean for her the loss of that precious inner eye where-with honor and virtue see, and thus and then, alas! the loss of her soul.

However, she heard water dripping from the wagon body; the wheels were on stony ground again, groaning along up grade. And at the top of the hill came two welcome things—a whiff of air fresh off the fields, and a kind greeting from the Beeswax Man, who had lifted a lid in the seat.

"Come up front," said he; "you can put your head out and sit straight and be more comfortable. What does all this mean?" he added, as Po complied.

She told him how she had been decoyed; and then, at his request, her whole life-story. He listened with many "Oh's!" and "Ah's!" and sympathetic expressions.

"I've talked with runaways about old Nat," said he, reflectively. "Do you know why this wagon has a hiding-place in it?"

"It's for black people to hide in on the freedom road."

THE SEA HAWK

"Yes, that's it. Give me hold of your hand."

He guided her fingers up and down some scores of notches cut on the back-rest of the seat.

"You can rake your fingers across hundreds of nicks there," he said; "and every nick means a runaway slave landed safe beyond Mason and Dixon's Line. Now look me in the eyes."

He held his lantern up so that he could see her face and so that she could see his.

"Don't you ever breathe one breath about this wagon, or about me, or about what you know of underground railroading," he commanded.

"I'll keep your secret; indeed I will," said Po, awed by his solemnity of voice and manner, as she gazed hard at the wart button. "I've heard a passel about the underground railroaders," she continued; "but never laid eyes on one till now. I wish you'd tell me about them."

"You'd better ask the owls. They can post you on the Undergrounders."

"The owls?"

"Start in where Mason and Dixon's Line starts and go West a thousand miles and ask every blessed owl that hoots. And while you're about it, you might ask the barn-swallows and the chimney-swifts and the mice that live in the garrets and closets and behind the panels. They know the Undergrounders."

"Ain't you afraid you'll stir up strife?" asked Po.

"That's just what we want to do," replied the Beeswax Man; "we're going to bust up slavery or bust up the Union."

Po slipped down under the beeswax cakes, and thought for a long time about the poor black people whose hearts had thumped against these very boards. How many thousands of them were stealing away every year from their masters! Some of the love she felt for Jule went out to them, and she fell asleep.

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At a sudden gruff "Whoa!" from the Beeswax Man, she opened her eyes, bewildered. She listened. That was a robin she heard—"killer-ee! killer-ee! killeep! killeep!"—and day must be breaking; yet she knew it was still dark roundabout, for through a chink in the wagon-body she saw a lantern shining against what she took to be a booted leg. Men were talking in the road and, oh, ill fortune! she herself was the subject of the colloquy. Why was the Beeswax Man so vehement? He was defending her—telling her story. What did it all mean? Because of what she had gone through, and because of her sudden awakening, it was easy for her to believe that his parley was with none other than the Sea Hawk. "Mozambique!" she gasped, burying her face in the straw.

"Wake up, miss!" called the Beeswax Man at the wagon-tail, letting light in upon her; "you change teams here."

The wagon was at the fork of the road. A dearborn stood close at hand.

"Don't be afraid," he added, as he brushed the straw from her frock; "this man won't eat you. He's my boss—Mr. Ned Farrabee."

"Yours to command, my little woman," said Farrabee.

Po looked up. Sure enough, the stranger had nothing of the Mozambique air about him. The Sea Hawk's eyes were black and enigmatical; these were the biggest, brownest, kindest eyes she had ever gazed into. Handsome though the Sea Hawk was, his charm was the devil's charm, or the pirate's charm at best; and one might fancy he kept ladies' hearts bottled in alcohol in his private locker on shipboard. But here surely was the face of a young man with great goodness in him. True, it was a lean face, and weather-beaten; hardship's stamp was on it; also it was alert, determined, combative—the frontier, as it seemed, of a pioneering soul.

THE SEA HAWK

"Oh, I kin trust you!" said Po, with joy in her voice.

"You ' kin'," said Farrabee, with a quick smile. "You can trust me not to harm you, and I'm sure I can trust you not to harm us by mentioning our wagon."

He turned towards a clump of bushes and whistled.

"My boss is a fine man," said the wagoner, under his breath; "he's King of the Undergrounders."

The whistle brought two runaways out of the bushes. Each had the look of a hunted animal.

"Boys," said Farrabee, "there's your hiding-place under the beeswax; but before you get in I want you to tell this lady about the black girl who called herself Jule and fought so hard in your coffle."

"Hit was her dat gib us de chanst ter git erway," said the spokesman.

"Did she have a heavy underlip?" asked Po, eagerly.

"'Deed she had, missus. Hit hung down des lac er hoss's lip."

There was to be an auction at the slave jail in Washington, he explained, and the coffle was hurrying towards that city when Jule had set upon the white men. A fight had followed. He, with others, had escaped.

The joy in Po's eyes quickly changed to horror when, at Farrabee's grim bidding, the man held up a bloody right hand.

Seeing the horror he had awakened, the negro lifted his face to the stars now fading in the pearly light from the east.

"Hit was boun' fer ter be so," he said; "en dat blood'll be wash erway!"

"In with you, boys," said Farrabee; "and good luck go with you. Come, little woman, let me give you a lift. Sit there on the front seat and we'll talk as we travel. Tommy has told me about you, and I suppose you want to go to Washington. We'll drive to the riverside and

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look for your pungy. If it isn't there, I'll put you in my landlady's hands."

"And then?" asked Po, anxiously, her thoughts upon Jule.

"Why," said Farrabee, putting whip to his horses "I'll go with you to the slave pen in search of your black girl."

Silence followed. A sweet sense of relief and hope came over Po. When Farrabee began to question her there was a charm for him in her voice. In this situation, friendship quickly formed. When the sun came up she saw him to better advantage. There was something in his expression that puzzled her. Later, when she had come to know him as a zealot, she understood the peculiar look; and even now she partly fathomed its meaning.

"Mr. Tommy says you're King of the Undergrounders," she ventured.

"What a goose Tommy Beeswax is!" He paused, reflected, glanced sidelong at her. "I shouldn't be a bit surprised," he continued, "if you and I turn out to be friends. So please don't start in with a wrong notion of me. I'm a puzzle to myself sometimes; but of one thing I'm certain,—I can't keep my mouth shut. Therefore I'm not fit to be what Tommy says I am. I really couldn't king it over a ditchful of frogs. And, besides my dear young lady, we Undergrounders think of a king as something worse than a Southern aristocrat. We haven't so much as a leader, much less a king. Ours is just a neighborhood business in the five or six hundred valleys that point towards the North Star. Upon my word, that's all it is. Tommy's a jackass. You see we're mostly plain farmers, millers, school-teachers, and so on and we're doing this work because we happen to live in the free counties bordering slave counties."

"And the man-stealers?" asked Po; "where do they live?"

THE SEA HAWK

"In the same strip," said Farrabee; "and naturally it's a case of bloody and eternal war. Take those Logans up our way. Ever since I can remember Dad's been running black people through by underground, and the Logans have been catching them and tying them by ring and chain to the floors of their pens. From the time I was a bit of a boy till I left home to go to college I waited on refugee blacks hiding in our garret, or in the holes Dad had blasted under the rocks. Dad's a South Mountain farmer. He runs the big Bee Farm up there; and the Lord's own spot it is; with just about a million flowers in bloom this time of the year."

"I'd like to see it," said Po, simply.

"And I should like you to," laughed Farrabee. Again he glanced admiringly at her.

"Well, now, see here. Dad's been begging me to get a wife and come live on the old place. He'd be agreeably surprised if I'd drive in on him with something besides beeswax and niggers. But, beware, young woman!" He turned upon her with such a comic look that she laughed outright. "Dad's a milder man than I am. I've got rattlesnake poison in me!"

"Rattlesnake poison!"

"That's what I said. But you needn't edge away,—I'll not fang you. I got it honestly. You see, Dad was a ne'er-do-weel at my age. He used to roam the mountains; shooting deer, studying nature, studying bees. He was at Berkeley Springs one day, selling some wild turkeys he had shot, when he heard a young woman away up on a rock cry out. A snake had struck her. Dad sucked out the poison. Her people were very haughty great folks; but she became my mother, and, God rest her! died a happy woman among the Bee Farm flowers. But the venom's in her son, I guess,—for I hate the gentry she was bred among."

"You shouldn't hate people," said Po, softly.



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"Oh, well, it isn't 'hate,' I suppose," said Farrabee; "that's just a handy word a fellow uses now and then. I don't even hate that man Sproule down in Washington here. My last row was with Sproule. I got home from California not long ago. Dug gold out there—pecks of it. And, would you believe it? I struck the Bee Farm just in time to knock out the Sheriff. Poor Dad! Mr. Sproule's Mr. Coutts was up there foreclosing on him. Wasn't that lucky? King of the Undergrounders, hey!"



Chapter XIII

PO AND FARRABEE

FARRABEE left Po at the bethel-boat and went his way.

An hour later the pungy party surprised Sproule in his office, where Jett made himself known and asked how he could find Tabitha Ann. Sproule's guilty conscience dodged within him, like a rat caught in a trap. In starting up he overturned his chair, but by the time he had set it upon its legs was ready with a smile.

"Why, I'm uncommonly glad to see you," said he. "Where's McQueal? In the hospital, you say? That's bad. It's most unfortunate that my friend Coutts has left town. But I myself will slip over and prepare Mrs. Coutts for your visit, as it would never do to surprise her outright. Pray, make yourselves comfortable."

Po was pleased with this gentleman.

"Our girl Jule's been stolen," she ventured; "and I've got word she's in the slave jail here."

Sproule gave Jett a quick look. Much flew into that disciplined part of his mind which was as a winnowing mill for facts,—McQueal's attempt to blackmail him; scheme of revenge; seizure of Jule; injury at Jule's hands.

On the way to Little G Street he made some ugly faces. So the Jetts were not dead. Nor was Po Groudy at Ballast Creek. What a scrape for a man of his standing to be in! It was a determined knock he gave, and it startled Tabitha Ann, who came running down in her wrapper.

"Mrs. Coutts," he began, "I've been told you're soaring high these days. They tell me you've joined the beau monde."

"Mercy, Mr. Sproule!" cried Tabitha Ann; "it ain't

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so. It ain't a word of it so. It's a low-lived scandal about me—that's what it is. And I'm a Christian woman I'd have you know. So there, now!"

"Never mind, madam," said Sproule, taking on a conciliatory air; "I didn't come to scold you, but to tell you that if you'll do exactly as I wish I'll help you climb still nearer the top. I'll even beg Mrs. Sproule to take you into her favor, as I might say. But I seek a favor from you in return."

"Goodness gracious," said Tabitha Ann, drying her eyes; "a favor from me, Mr. Sproule!"

"Now, madam," said Chockley, "see here! You understand your husband's relations with me. I could ruin him with a word; and, what's more, I could ruin you. I know all about your poor-house baby—now keep quiet, Mrs. Coutts! Hear me through. I'm coming to a delicate point. That very same daughter yours——"

"She's dead!" protested Tabitha Ann.

"She's not dead!" persisted Sproule. "Woman, will you don't you show some sense? She's with old Jett and Jett's wife at my office, and they'll all three be here in this house in ten minutes."

Tabitha Ann's head sank slowly back.

"Tut!" said Sproule; "face the music. They won't disgrace you if you're smart enough to play a little game. I, too, have a reason for getting rid of the party. All you've got to do is to let on you're fond of your newly found daughter; and you mustn't hint of the business to Coutts."

Between the time of Chockley's departure and return Tabitha Ann arrayed herself in crinoline. Poor woman ran ahead of the Jetts to greet her.

"Mother, oh, mother!" she cried, embracing her.

"La-me, child," said Mrs. Coutts; "why don't you wear hoops? They're all the style."

PO AND FARRABEE

In the hour they were together Po wondered at her mother; and wondered at herself, for her thoughts were not those of a loving daughter. Rather were they upon a new plan she had conceived looking to Jule's rescue; and when at last she got out of the house she was light-footed enough to run.

Farrabee had engaged to meet Po in the Capitol grounds, and he was awaiting her there. Was it her beauty that had impressed him so much? Or her simplicity? Or her forlornness? There was a particular reason why he should not soften into so unnerving a passion as love. He had resolved to spend his money in agitating for freedom. At this very time he was organizing the powerful Tabor Society. But it was a weakness of his that he often felt drawn away from his Abolition path by the wish to live a fitting and kindly life. He had glimpses of the truth that in a complex state one can only do approximately what ought to be done. How necessary plantation discipline was; what a blessing labor was; the good wrought by the very men he was wont to scarify—these things Farrabee admitted, and at times he was almost ready to give up his crusade. Then, suddenly, he would get upon a moral mountain-top again, fill his lungs with air, and pour his curses down upon the fogs below. He must not care for individuals. He was devoted to a cause. Hence no girl should divert him.

In spite of the heat, Po was walking so fast when Farrabee caught sight of her that he had to step along at his best gait in order to overtake her.

Many people—members of Congress, clerks, lobbyists, visitors—were on the way to the Capitol, and it did not escape Farrabee that the older men glanced at Po admiringly under their eyebrows. "Youth to them is bright," he reflected. "God help them! They themselves are bones—old politicians, hard as horn. A bull calf's

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horns are so soft at first you can see the veins in them and watch the blood run; and after that they harden and harden, and get to be like an old Whig's conscience, or an old Democrat's, which is worse. Why are you staring at the Capitol?" he asked, coming up to Po.

"I was wondering whether that's the place where the law-makers are."

"That's the very spot. But what of it?"

"Why, the feeling has come over me to go in and tell them about Jule's being onlawfully kept in prison."

Farrabee laughed his heartiest. "The idea! What in the name of common sense are you talking about, anyhow? Do you mean you would like to sashay right plum into the mighty United States Senate, or House of Representatives, with the great guns thundering eloquently, and all those lovely-faced ladies I saw pass just now sitting in their elegant toilettes—would you walk in there and tell the honorables to their faces that Jule is *your* nigger and you'd thank 'em to get after the officials of the District of Columbia with a sharp stick and make 'em let Jule off? Oh, come now,—would you?"

"Yes," said Po, simply, glancing up the great granite steps.

"The simplicity of it! the ignorance of it! the idiocy of it! Why, see here, girl, they won't listen to you."

"No one has ever stopped his ears to me."

"Not even the Sea Hawk, missy? And you'd, sure pop, like to try it?"

"Where the Lord leadeth, there am I not afear'd to walk!"

"Nor I; but how about it when the Old Boy leads? Maybe it's the Old Boy. Many's the time he's been up these steps we're climbing. You don't see the print of his hoofs because the stone's a little too hard—that's all. But here we are—under your Uncle Sam's roof. This is the rotunda. The place you're looking for is the Hall of

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the House—right over there. Just you walk straight in, the minute I begin to chaff with the man at the door."

They could see into the chamber. Members were lolling in their seats. Many fans were going. There was a sound as of a greenbottle-fly buzzing against a window pane.

"That's the clerk," explained Farrabee; "he's reading a bill."

"And when the clerk ends, shall I begin?" asked Po.

"I know nothing about it," said Farrabee. "Don't ask me. Mind, now, missy, I'm not leading you; it's the Lord!" Then he added: "I say, take a good look at him when you get in the gallery. I saw him win a cool five thousand at faro last night."

They had come close to the fringe of people at the entrance of the chamber, and Farrabee had raised his voice. The doorkeeper grew inquisitive at once.

"Five thousand!" he exclaimed; "was it at the Virginia?"

Farrabee began to talk to the doorkeeper; and Po, unchallenged, entered the House. She passed swiftly along the aisle towards the Speaker's desk. The Speaker must be to this body, she thought, what the preacher is to a congregation; and she meant to ask his permission to speak. But when she had gone half-way down she was courteously halted by a member, who motioned towards the gallery. "Madam," said he, "you will permit me to call a page, who will show you the place for visitors."

Po misunderstood him. In a sweet voice, thrown high, she said: "I've not larned your ways, honorable gentlemen; but I dare beseech you in a trouble near my heart, and one I'm certain you'll help me out of. There's a prison here in the District where black people are kept——"

She got no further. There was an exciting moment.

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Mixed sounds arose,—gavel pounding, cries of "Silence!" chuckling laughter, explosive sarcastic guffaws. By common electrification each member was on his feet.

"An Abolitionist!" cried an excited Southerner; "it's the frocked and bonneted spirit of old John Quincy Adams!"

Sergeants-at-arms made their way towards Po.

"Come!" said Farrabee; "don't you see what a row you're raising?"

Then, as he led her back into the rotunda, he whispered to the doorkeeper: "Excuse her, sir—she's a little touched on top!"

"What's the matter?" asked Po. "Did I give offence? Why did they laugh?"

"For Heaven's sake!" cried Farrabee, "keep quiet till we get good and off. I'll burst in a minute. Never say 'slavery' in the District again, missy,—the Deestrick! Ha, ha! Why, don't you know that Congress is ashamed of slavery in the Deestrick, and that everybody has been fighting about it for ten years dead running? Let's go look for Jule."

Only a screen of trees shut off the slave jail from their view as they descended the Capitol steps and walked towards Maryland Avenue. Po's excitement brought a beautiful glow into her face. Farrabee looked at her with wide-open eyes. He had made up his mind not to give way to the girl, but in spite of his efforts to be stern with himself he felt the softness of self-pity and wished in his soul he were free to love her as he would like. A downright love-pang now first smote him. He frowned and strode faster. Innocent of this struggle in his breast between desire and duty, Po misapprehended the meaning of the sudden change. A sweet awe of him mingled with admiration came over her. She felt that he was, indeed, King of the Undergrounders. Approaching danger he had grown stern.

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A mastiff at the gateway sprang towards them, but came only the length of his chain. His growls brought the keeper.

"He thinks I am the new auctioneer," whispered Farrabee, returning to Po, after a talk aside with the man. "Let him keep on thinking so."

They followed the keeper to an auction-yard in the rear of the prison,—an old building, gray and solemn, with pigeons circling about. Many slave-dealers were waiting in the yard. In shirt-sleeves and broadbrim straws they squatted in the shady places. Some were whittling, some playing cards, some wrangling over politics.

"Fetch out the cattle," said Farrabee, stepping briskly to the auction-block. As he threw off his coat, Po saw revolver butts at each hip. He seemed another man to her at once, not only because he was thus armed, but because of his assumption of a manner in keeping with what he was about to do.

Three prisoners, emerging from the jail, gave cowed glances about them as they approached the block.

"Strip them," demanded a dealer; and the men were laid bare.

Farrabee saw that Po did not flinch or move an eyelid. He himself flushed. It was clear to him that she was beyond the small shame of things, but he could have felled the wretch who had insulted her.

"Step up, gentlemen! Come, look them over!" cried Farrabee. "There's no humbug here—no consumption, no rheumatism. Feel the muscles. Why, they're ropes, gentlemen. Just thump that man's chest, if you please."

A laughing black boy ran out of the jail, leaped up on the block, stood on his head, gave a whoop, and bounded down, with the assertion: "I'se wuff er t'ousand ef I'se wuff er copper."

Then came Jule. She was cut and bloody, and could walk only with the help of the jailer. She was still

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gagged. At sight of her, Po ran forward and, wiping the blood from the corners of the badgered creature's mouth, kissed her.

Jule's scowl passed on the instant into a look of supreme tenderness. Though her hands were tied behind her, she caressed Po with her body and whined like a puppy.

"How's this?" asked the jailer of Farrabee; "didn't you two come in together?"

"What do you take me for?" said Farrabee, affecting indignation. "Stand back, young woman. You interrupt the sale. What do you say, gentlemen? Shall the last one shown be the first on the block? Up she goes! And, now, who bids? It's a waste of breath to tell you she's as strong as a horse and as gentle as a lamb. In fact, I won't say another word about her physical parts. What I want to make clear to you is that whoever buys her buys——"

Farrabee paused and looked around. He seemed as if troubled with the heat and felt for his handkerchief. In the search his revolvers were laid upon the block ready at hand.

"Buys what?" asked a dealer who stood glowering near.

"Why," said Farrabee, "an immortal soul. How nice it will be to own an immortal soul!"

"Stop!" cried the glowerer. "This is fool-talk. What d'ye mean?"

Po saw that knives and pistols were out. She gave Farrabee a warning touch.

"You'd better get away," said he.

Po whispered a reassuring word to Jule and left the yard.

The slave-dealers came crowding up. Farrabee assumed a new air.

"Now, gentlemen," said he, replacing his revolvers but keeping his hands on his hips, "I don't want to carry a

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good joke too far. Let me explain. As I came in our friend, the keeper here, pounced down on me and would have it that I was his auctioneer. I humored him just for the fun of it. What I really came for was to put you on your guard about this black girl and to warn him not to let her be sold. She was stolen from her mistress and I mean to have her back or go to law. So I've done you a good turn. Don't you agree with me?"

"It's a damn sell," said the glowerer, thrusting his pistol into his pocket; "let's all adjourn for a drink."

On the deck of the "Widow's Sons" that evening Farrabee continued his studies of Po. River craft were thick about the pungy. In the sky and on the water lingered a long twilight. Farrabee liked to look at the barefooted watermen, with their unchecked laughter, as they passed sociably from sloop to sloop or gathered in groups on the shore. At the next wharf below some swimmers splashed and hullabalooed, and from a schooner in midstream came the well-fiddled tale of "Old Dan Tucker."

"Let's have service, gran'pa," said Po.

Captain Jett blew a blast on a tin horn. When a few of the watermen had taken seats, Po began to sing. The fiddler in midstream accompanied her, and the swimmers splashed nearer, till by and by they reached the bobstays, where they clung, shoulders out, listening. The balm of the night and the girl's pathetic, sweet voice, so pure and sincere, fell softly upon Farrabee's inmost self. For a time he was bewitched. Part of the charm was dispelled when Po exhorted the watermen, yet the note of sincerity was here likewise. He was pleased at heart; but it suited his mood to ridicule her after the bathers and boatmen had gone.

"Why is it you say 'passel' and 'creetur' and 'his'n' and 'her'n'?" he laughed. "My, my, missy, *you* don't know enough to preach."

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"It ain't fair to talk like that," protested Po. "I've got a call to do good in the world; there's many a soul a-hungering to be saved."

"SINNERS come ye to repentance," he mocked. "Oh, I know the sing-song, young lady. As for me, I doubt whether I've got any more soul than a dog. Some men, I verily believe, are lower down than dogs."

"You're a-most a heathen."

"Yes, I'm a good deal of a heathen. I won't put up with the logic that proves it to be the duty of the slave to take the blows his master gives him. You say: purify the soul, so that it may be fit for the place where all is pure. I say: free foot and high head for man on earth. You fight to save man's soul, and I fight to save man's manhood. So there we are."

"I'm sorry you're an unbeliever."

"Oh, it's not quite so hopeless as that. You see, it's this way: When I'm with bad men, and see their brutality, I say to myself they have no souls, and feel that what we call the human soul is just the life that's in us like the life that's in a shoat or a cat or a bull pup. But when I'm with *you* I feel that there must be a spirit that doesn't perish. One like you lives in the flesh for the fraction of an age, and it isn't right or reasonable that such a spirit as yours should die when your body dies. You ought to live forever, and there ought to be a heaven for all like you. Still, I stick to it that you're unfit to do what you're attempting. Why, your little world's a mere oyster cove. What do you know of the real world? For ages men have sweated and fumed over the Bible; thousands have gone mad over it; vast cathedrals have been built on piles of bones just because of it. I honestly think you'd grow if I had the training of you. So far as I can see, you've only got one horrible quirk in your head. How can you so discredit a Creator good enough to make a thing like yourself, or put fidelity into a dog's nature,

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or intrust the seeds of flowers with their cunning, as to make Him out guilty of burning a poor sinful body through eternity? I almost despise you for thinking such a thing possible. Take my advice and drop the idea. Cut loose from it, just as you're going to cut loose from that old plug-ugly McQueal I've heard about—that flim-flammer, that fleecer! Cut loose from hell-fire, from McQueal, from 'Gran'pa.' 'Gran'pa's' ripe for heaven; and I don't think he needs you as much as I do. I'm head over heels in love with you. I'll marry you, if you'll let me; and we'll roam the country over for Abolition's sake. You can sing like an angel; and by and by, when I get you in hand, you'll be able to preach a hundred times better than you do now. I won't make you too fine, but I'll be blamed if I don't crush the cant and ignorance out of you and make you keen and cunning and a power in the land."

Po lifted her arm. "Wait, Mr. Farrabee. I won't be your wife, fur I ain't got it in mind to marry; I won't be an Abolitionist, kase I'll never help to stir up strife; I'll not be keen, and I'll not be cunning. I'll be what I am."

He sat silent, pondering.

"I know what you mean to larn me, Mr. Farrabee—that my preachin' is all babble; but I've seen the wicked in the places where the wicked live, and the pore where the pore live; and I'm set in my mind to go daily now into the by-ways where the sorrowful are. Forgive me, brother, if I say to you I think it wrong to shame me so and turn me aside from doing what my breeding best fits me to do."

She began to cry. Farrabee, in his fondness, took her hand. They were fast passing into love.

"Listen!" she said. "What's that?"

There was a carriage near the wharf, and some one was shouting.

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"It's nobody but a black girl calling 'crabs,'" said Farrabee.

"I'll lay it's Jule!" cried Po. She made haste ashore, Farrabee following.

It was Jule in truth. Laughing at the extravagant joy of the two, Farrabee left them. He had heard Jule speak of "Marse Chock" as her deliverer, but did not suspect him to be one and the same with the grasping Sproule. Had he known this, he would have wondered.

Wonder-struck he actually was next day when he returned to the wharf. The "Widow's Sons" had vanished in the night. Should he find a swift boat and follow?

Perhaps it was as well that he did not, for at this hour the pungy was a long way off. With foam enough in her eye to drown a cat, and a kiss of salt on her copper, she passed out of the Potomac and went scooning up the bay under a fanning high breeze that took the rake out of her topmast and made a whistle of every scrap of tackle.

With Jule restored, Po should have been happy. But she was downcast all day long. Two faces haunted her,—the Sea Hawk's, at which she shuddered; Farrabee's, at which she flushed. Farrabee had set strange emotions astir in her breast. His dissuasion so deeply affected her that she wished to give up bethel-boating. But Jett would not hear of it. He left Chesapeake waters, and cruised north to Philadelphia; and one night introduced her in Mariner's Chapel that she might talk to the outcasts of Southwark,—a strange congregation, ragged, leering, sin-smitten, pitiful. This was the foul part of the city. Here Jack steered not by the needle, but by the point of his knife. As Po stood up, it came to her that Farrabee's scornful truth was a poor, sad lie. His shadow departed from about her. She pricked to the finger-tips with the thrill that went through her. Sorrow, pity,

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love seized her; and all her old-time ecstasy of spirit came back to her. Whatever of compassion she had was transmuted into eloquence now; so that her tongue seemed a bell ringing a merciful message for Jack,—Jack of the far seas, cursing at the door; careless Jack who spat upon the hem of her frock, but who looked up into her face with a whine in his eye and a sneaking dog-love for that wonderful God of whom she spoke. All that had been kept back in Po since Farrabee had disheartened her now came rushing up as from her soul. She could not stay the push and power of her spirit nor check herself in the least. That which he had told her not to say, she said. Hers was now the exaltation and the triumph.

Indeed, had Jett been steadfast, Po would have done much good as a chapel exhorter up and down the Atlantic coast. But he sold the pungy and bought a canal-boat, the "Kitty Jett," for gospel work on the Erie. And after that:

"He war a-settin' thar a-studyin'," said Mrs. Jett, "when a monstrous big idee struck him hot-thump, an' up he sprung an' sez he: 'Gran'ma, I've found it at last,—I've found what I've been a-sarchin' fur all my born days.'"

Jett did not disclose to Po what it was that had been revealed to him. He patted himself in secret, and smiled, and worked cunningly towards the end in view. He was going West—by the Erie, by the Ohio, by the Missouri. McQueal would be glad to go with him as far as the Mississippi, for the gambling there was not to be despised. But he—ha, ha!—he would sell Jule again, and then he would go join the Mormons; he would sell Jule into slavery, and Po he would sell to the "Saints."





PART III

PASQUE





Chapter XIV

A SEA ISLE LORDLING

SO much for Sis' Po's namesake, from the day Nat of Cross Keys cried "Bango, breddern!" till she grew to be a woman, vagabonding through the world for the glory of God; but not a great deal up to this time about that other waif of the Rising,—“Little Black Eyes,” “Little Purple Top,” Pasque Le Butt,—the boy whom Eubanks found at the school-house and gave over to the owners of the crimson-lined coach.

Pasque, of course, became a little lord among the black people at Martello. All that was in sight anywhere seemed to be his—the island, the sky above, the waters around. Pasque was not sure that he fell short in proprietorship of the sea-turtles and wild turkeys and white cranes. With his hounds and his ponies and his squire, he ranged the principality like one of the blood.

Peter John was the squire. Peter John was almost white; yet, by caste-and-color paradox, he was black. He did not pass on Martello as Le Butt's son; he was only Maum Kizzie's "yaller boy." Much mischief was in Peter John. He was beaten at times; Pasque never. Cunning developed in Peter John; a fool's pride in Pasque. However, Pasque burned with shame whenever it was made clear to him that he had acted a lie or broken a rule of Carolina lordliness.

When Pasque went to school in Charleston he showed a dumb head for books; Peter John, who, under the law, could not go to school, picked up in vacation time all that his young master had learned in term time. Pasque had to be driven; Peter John was eager to learn because of

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the interdict against his learning. At this period Colonel Le Butt sought to instruct Pasque in plantation management. Given a cotton problem to work out, or some account to verify, Pasque would labor unwillingly over the task; and it was Peter John at the white boy's shoulder who found the answer, his sharp black eyes chasing an error to its lurking-place just as if it had been a fox. Being so smart, Peter John grew in favor with Colonel Le Butt; and when Huff, the overseer, died, was made manager.

Pasque, meantime, became a hero. What Elizabeth had wished was to make a bishop of him. He was so dignified, and was coming into a most noble voice. Colonel Le Butt laughed at her. Pasque had no more religion than she could put in her thimble, he said.

Just then the Mexican War broke out; and Pasque went South with Captain Jack Archinel, who talked with him by the hour, on the way down, about the glorious men they would meet on the Rio Grande,—for "Charlie" May would be there, and Ridgeley, and all their comrades—the flower of the army, boasted Captain Jack.

Elizabeth made much of her premonitions,—a cannon-ball would take off Pasque's head; Pasque would die of fever. It was Pasque this and Pasque that.

Unlike Elizabeth, Belle gloried in the war. She was the soldier's wife from the start. In truth, much of Betsey Wortley was already appearing in Belle. She knew Jack would win laurels and come home nobler than ever. What she must do was to keep their little daughter, Rhetta, fresh and fair. But bad news came. For Captain Jack died in Pasque's arms at Resaca de la Palma, after Pasque had brought him off the field in such a way that praise for Pasque came ringing up from Mexico.

That was why, when the war was over, Pasque went

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to West Point, with swelling thoughts of what he would do when he should have prepared himself to wear Jack Archinel's sword. Yes, he would dress his hair just as Captain Jack had done; and then—well, wouldn't Peter John stand back, though, and wouldn't the whole of old South Carolina, including his doubting mother, be proud of him! Maybe, also, Captain Jack's daughter would learn to like him better than she liked Johnsey Sproule. Pasque cherished this thought a long while. Johnsey was preparing for West Point and would make a good soldier; but, after all, Johnsey wasn't a hero. Pasque hoped that as Rhetta grew up she would draw the distinction, and by and by marry him. In reality Rhetta stood in awe of Cousin Pasque. She did not know that with all his stalwartness of frame, and despite the black down on his upper lip, he was still a boy—manful only in a certain stubbornness that possessed him and in the military air he had taken on with his little cadet jacket and big Chapultepec cap that looked like a bootleg set upon his close curling hair. She herself in her pink frock and flowing ribbons and spreading pantalettes was as boyish as were Johnsey's twin brothers, Chancellor and Will, and far happier than either the serious Johnsey or the stolid Pasque,—oh, so happy and beautiful, with curls like the sun when it paints the tops of the pines.

Just once had Pasque seen Po. It was while he was walking along the Hudson on an evening in the spring of his graduation. The Erie Canal was about to open. Out from Coenties slip and Whitehall docks had come a thousand boats, and great flotillas of them were passing up-stream. The "Kitty Jett" was moored in a cluster of white barges, for "Gran'pa" had not yet executed his new plan,—in fact, he and McQueal were acting as spies for the canal company, thus getting toll commutation; and Po, for her part, was glad to be able to exhort the tow-path boys, who could not but be wicked, since it was

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their fate to drive the self-same mules of which the poet wrote:

"Their legs are bunged, and their eyes are blind,
And there ain't any hair on their tails behind."

"Old Calamity scow" the tow-path boys called the "Kitty Jett," but they liked to hear the "preacher gal" sing in that fine voice of hers—full, round, and sweet as it was—a song she had adapted to gospel use: "Lock be-l-e-ow! Steady, steady!"

Po was exhorting when Pasque approached the cluster of barges. He had heard Mother Elizabeth and Aunt Archinel talk of Po, and he remembered that they were scandalized. So he exclaimed to himself: "The devil! That's the girl old Unc' Eph Steptoe snatched out of the fire!"

He did not go up to Po and tell her that he, too, was a waif of Nat's War; on the contrary, he felt ashamed, and walked away. He was a proud young man,—Pasque Le Butt,—a high-stepping Carolinian now. Many a rose had he trodden under foot at the St. Cecilians in Charleston; and by and by he would be dancing at Saratoga, if Mother Elizabeth should have her way.

There was no doubt that Mrs. Le Butt was socially ambitious. It was in order to gratify his wife that Colonel Le Butt had just entered Congress, taking a house in Lafayette Square. At least, that is what Le Butt himself said; though Elizabeth could have told a different story. She had urged him to make the contest for his own good. It had grown plain to her that he was in danger of becoming the victim of his own habits of indolence. Or was it table-lingering, politics, and old port?—cards, State Rights and again old port? Too much heavy gambling down at Natchez, possibly, when he journeyed to the Mississippi country to look after his Homochitto plantation. Moreover, there were signs that he was

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wasting his substance. In spite of his lordly income, there were small debts long unsatisfied, there were large debts growing larger.* Elizabeth had reminded Le Butt of Betsey Wortley's thrift. The upshot had been a quarrel, ever memorable at Martello; and that autumn Le Butt had reached with success after a political prize.

At Washington the very redness of his face did him good service. "There goes your fire-eater!" was said of him repeatedly; and if by chance Le Butt overheard the words, he was both flattered and amused. He was amused because in his own heart he knew that he was not a "fire-eater;" he liked the soft and the smooth, and never did he see a peacock at strut but he wished to stroke its feathers. In fact, he shunned the House when angry debates were going on. Rather did he court the society of those who like himself played a high game mildly and drank like gentlemen. But his drawl was often irritating at the card-table; and when he was in liquor it was exasperating in the House. He chose to ignore some of the members who were known to have Abolition entanglements. He could turn his broad back upon such a man so effectively that the act in itself expressed contempt. As for his trick of looking over and beyond a man whom he wished to disregard, that was not surpassed by any actor in the great Congressional drama of the fifties.

Thus stood affairs when something developed in an unexpected quarter. Peter John was heard from by letter. He asked for five thousand dollars. He must have the money, or he'd shoot himself.

"Heigh-ho!" cried Colonel Le Butt; "did you ever! What does the scamp mean? Five thousand, or suicide! He knows I wouldn't take a hundred thousand for him!"

Colonel Le Butt looked at the postmark—Natchez; but smart as a steel trap was Peter John, and he couldn't have lost so heavily at cards as all that. A dandy for

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dress was he; but, with a liberal allowance as manager of the Homochitto plantation, what could he want with five thousand dollars in hard cash, all-a-heap and urgently?

Colonel Le Butt talked with his wife about it.

"Elizabeth," said he, "I'd as well send the money; but where am I to lay hands on it? Don't you think I'd better call on your brother?"

"Borrow of Chockley Sproule?" cried Mrs. Le Butt. "Never! Let Peter John work out his own salvation, if he stands in need of saving. It's my belief some girl has struck his fancy, and he wants to buy her."

Up went Colonel Le Butt's white eyebrows, backward went his head; a fit of laughter seized him.

"My dear," he said, "you have intuitions; I'm stupid. The puzzle's solved. The moment you spoke about the girl side of it there flashed into my mind something I heard in the way of romance when I was last at Homochitto. Ha, ha! the tender passion. Peter John's in love. Sacristy Jane's the girl's name. There's only a faint dash of negro in her,—she's a demi-meamelouc, or maybe sang-mele,—the stain doesn't show except in berry-picker fashion at the finger-tips; but she's part Cherokee,—this Yazoo siren of Peter John's,—and her voice, they say, comes out of her throat as from a bird. Strange I didn't think of her before. Why, I warned Peter John against her. Sacristy Jane's a chronic runaway. He's been too eager to get the girl, and her owner has marked her up fivefold. Love has robbed Peter John of all his cunning. He's been my brag on five hundred occasions as the smartest Handy Andy in all Dixieland—a terror to cotton factors, the best-dressed man in New Orleans——"

Suddenly Colonel Le Butt ceased to eulogize Peter John; there was something unflattering in Elizabeth's look.

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Besides, Pasque was clearing his throat in the hall, and a moment later entered.

"These are from Peter John," said Pasque, holding up a letter and a telegram when Colonel Le Butt had begun to speak of the affair. "The poor fellow's told me the whole story, and now he despatches from Frankfort, Kentucky, to come on without delay."

"Frankfort!" exclaimed Colonel Le Butt. "I thought he was in Natchez."

"The girl ran away; her master pursued her; Peter John followed. Sacristy Jane was caught near Frankfort, and with her was arrested a young white woman—an Abolitionist—who was making for free soil with her prize."

"A penitentiary offence," exclaimed Colonel Le Butt. "That female Abolitionist will get her due in Kentucky."

Pasque bowed to his mother, and then spoke in Colonel Le Butt's ear:

"There was a scene, sir. Sacristy's master acted the blackguard. He was about to strip her and put her on the block when Peter John threatened to kill the scoundrel and Sacristy Jane and himself. In the flurry the white woman—who had been looking for a black girl named Jule, sold off a boat in the Ohio River—made away with Sacristy."

"What's to be done?" asked Colonel Le Butt.

"I'm sorry, mother," said Pasque, "but I'll have to leave you two weeks earlier than I had intended. I'm already packed. I shall take the first train West and do what I can to get Peter John out of his scrape. I shall draw on you, sir, for the necessary money."

Pasque was now a second lieutenant in the same regiment of dragoons with whom he had ridden at Resaca de la Palma, and he was to join his command on the plains within three weeks.

"Good luck to you, my boy," said Colonel Le Butt;

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"and may Peter John come out of his escapade a happier darkey."

"Don't let Peter John whine too much money out of you for that girl," was Mother Elizabeth's parting injunction; "your father is terribly extravagant."

When Pasque reached Frankfort everybody seemed to be talking about Sacristy Jane and Po Groudy. It was a shock to him to find that she who had tried to befriend Sacristy Jane was "Sis Po's" namesake. Many a time since he had ignored her on the Hudson his conscience had smitten him. There was a haunting something in her voice he had never been able to rid himself of. So after he had bought Sacristy Jane for Peter John, and sent them both off for Homochitto, Pasque went to the Court-house where Po was on trial.

A tipstaff recognized Pasque, and, though the courtroom was packed, seated him near the prisoner. Pasque nosed the foul air contemptuously, glanced at the spectacled Judge, and turned his eyes upon Po. There was no daylight abroad the time he had heard her speak from the deck of the "Kitty Jett;" so he had conceived her to be a coarse young woman. Now he wondered at her. He wondered that the Judge did not come down from the bench, step up to the prisoner's box, bow, offer Po an arm, and escort her to a carriage at the Court-house door. Could it be that this gentle creature had stooped to do the bidding of low Abolitionists? Why, she had the looks of a lady,—not a fine, courtly lady like Auntie Archinel was before she went into mourning, nor a dainty body like his own mother, with her perfect hands and never a suggestion of disorder about her raiment,—but the looks and the stamp of a woman who could do nothing wrong.

"I see you're looking at her pretty hard," said an old gentleman at Pasque's side. "Oh, yes, I mean the prisoner." He laughed—for Pasque had reddened. "At the

A SEA ISLE LORDLING

glance you don't catch the real spirit in her face. Gad, sir! it's like looking at some masterpiece on wall,—the longer you look the more you see in it; by and by you realize what the painter had in mind when he used his brush. That girl's face reveals like statues in like manner. If she's a criminal, God help mankind!"

During the taking of testimony and the prosecutor's assignment, Pasque's eyes rested upon Po in wonder, awe, and pity. She had no friends, it seemed; no counsel. Heavens! what a lack-gallant he was that he did not go beat about the town for a lawyer and fee him to defend the girl. Too late. By permission of the court he had risen to tell her story. There was a queer quaver in her voice that made Pasque pity her the more. She herself was a bethel-boat preacher, she began.

Speaking once in a while for Christ and nine-tenths of the time for nigger-stealing Abolitionists," interjected the prosecutor.

No," said she; "peace is my mission. 'Go ye forth, heal the sick, bind the broken!'"

The prosecutor hummed:

"'Fare you well, Miss Lucy,
John come down the hollow.'"

Great as the jurors laughed and the Judge smiled. Only the judge brought his black brows together.

He continued. Her grandfather had started West.

The prosecutor wished to know what part of the West. You can't tell me?" he thundered. "Well, I can tell you. He was bound for Kansas, where half the free nation is hurrying,—Kansas and Nebraska, that's the game. May it please the court, this innocent-appearing girl, with a vile, cunning Abolition heart, says she came into this State in search of a black girl who van-



THE ISSUE

ished from her grandfather's flat-boat. Humbug! As these witnesses have testified, she was caught in the act of kidnapping a real girl,—not a figment,—whom she was hurrying off by underground. That's the gist of it and the snap and the whole coon-skin, hide and hair."

Pasque looked at Po when the verdict was announced, and fell again to wondering how the honorable court could do such a thing as pronounce a sentence of five years upon that sweet-faced girl, with eyes as clear and soft as the eyes of his little pet mare at Martello.



Chapter XV

THE HACKLING-HOUSE

THAT night Pasque's sleep was troubled. Nor did he leave Frankfort next morning, as he had planned, but went to the State prison resolved to make himself known to Po. He might hunt up Jett or telegraph for Dr. Eubanks; anyhow, he ought to do something. At the prison Pasque learned that Po had been let, with other convicts, to a contractor, and that she had been taken to a hackling-house to hackle flax. He was refused admittance to the hackling-house, but he hung about it so much that day and the next and the next that he became acquainted with the blacksmith who had a shop adjoining the end in which the women worked.

"There's goin' to be war," said the blacksmith, who was talkative. "Steve Douglas gave us a push that way when he wiped out the Compromise line. D'ye see the red-shirt cavalry pass through this mornin'? They're bound for Kansas."

Pasque answered absently. He was looking at the hackling-house. How he hated the place! Its ugliness had burned itself into his imagination, so that when he lay awake at night up would come the image of it, and with it another image—that of the patient face of the girl he pitied so. Back of the bellows was a window facing a hackling-house window, less than three feet away, to which the convicts sometimes came for air. Pasque found fascination in this window.

"Look there!" said he, suddenly.

Po was at the window, her elbow on the ledge. In a moment she disappeared.

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"That's the new gal," said the blacksmith. "She's like a pullet in a close coop. I swow she's dyin' for air! The way old Aunt Melindy, who fetches chickens to my wife, ties 'em by the leg with cuttin'-string on a hot day and stows them under her buggy seat in the sun is mar-ciful to the way the hacklin' boss crams the hacklers into that hole of damnation. Nor would I beat hot iron as he beats their flesh."

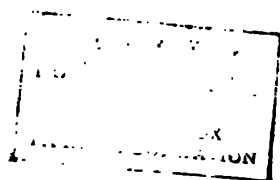
"Oh, that angel-faced girl!" sighed Pasque, on the way to his hotel; "and to think that she should be forced to work in such a place by such a man!"

He had heard a great deal of idle talk about love, and he had also heard of pity, and that night he thought so much about love and pity and Po that he did not sleep for hours. He himself had been shy of pity. In wrestling matches at Martello he had thrown boys hard and had never felt poignantly for them. He had killed birds wantonly. He had used the lash with his own hand upon vicious blacks. But a white woman. A woman such as she. Unc' Eph's little sweetheart of olden days. It angered Pasque to think that his pillow should be wet under his cheek. He sat upon the side of the bed and asked himself whether he loved the girl. Maybe so. Maybe that was what was making him so infernally baby-ish. He thought of Mother Elizabeth and of the supercilious Colonel Le Butt, pink of aristocrats. Love be smashed! Pasque swore aloud, cursing Po by name, cursing Abolition, till by and by he sank into a half-sleep in which he seemed to be drifting under the magnolias down on some perfumed Carolina river, with humming-birds and bees in the air and white clouds far, far in the blue.

In the morning Pasque packed his valise. He was going back to Washington to see Colonel Le Butt, so as to bring political pressure to bear upon the Governor of Kentucky looking to the pardon of Po, or at least to a



“LOOK! SHE’S RUN TO THE WINDOW!”



THE HACKLING-HOUSE

betterment of her condition. Should he go to the blacksmith's shop again? Well, yes, he would step in and say "Good-bye."

It was early and the blacksmith had just begun to blow his coals.

"That hackling-house boss is mighty devilish this mornin'," he said.

Pasque watched the brightening of the coals. The bellows wheezed, the fire roared, the blacksmith talked. There was a noise in the hackling-house.

"It's in this end," said the blacksmith. "Can't you hear the cat whistle?"

Pasque listened, shuddering.

"It's among the women. Didn't I tell you he was the devil to-day?"

The swish of a lash in air came with Pasque's every heart-beat.

"Take the sledge and let's play a tune to drown it," said the blacksmith, withdrawing a hissing iron bar from the forge. "Tap easy. That chap in there ain't a-tappin' easy, though. But you don't hear no screams, do you? That means it's her!"

Pasque dropped the sledge.

"What's the matter?" asked the blacksmith. He turned and drew another rod of iron sparkling hot from the fire. "I've half a mind to take this," he continued, "and go lam that dratted old Simon Girty of a gal-hipper clar out'n the State o' Kentucky! He's beatin' her to death! Hear that! Hear that! You can't hear her scream, but you can hear the lash. He's beatin' her to death, I say! Look! she's run to the window!"

Pasque went white in the flick of a pigeon's wing, then red. He thumbed at his collar,—the veins in his neck were swelling visibly, and the look in his eyes was as the look of a tormented bull. His thoughts came in flashes. He heard again the warning words of his West Point

THE ISSUE

mentor: "Subdue yourself, Le Butt. You have within you fifty Mohawks, each with a scalping-knife." But what was there now that could stay the leap of his blood? Reason was out now, and rage had him for her very own.

He leaped through the windows and sprang upon the brute and hurled him to the floor in such a way that the blood ran from his eyes. But that the blacksmith, following, hammer in hand, beat him off, there would have been not simple, tame murder, but a rending of body such as men in forests see when wild beasts have torn each other.

Po, unconscious, with stripped back sad to see, lay upon the floor of the hackling-house.

Cowering in the far corner of the room were the women convicts, and crowding in from the other quarters were the male prisoners—astounded for the moment, but soon uproariously jubilant at a strange thing done, as if Heaven had struck the striker and a new Judgment Day had come.

By the time Elizabeth Le Butt reached Frankfort the doctors were ready to say that the hackling-boss would not die; so Pasque was soon out on bail. Many telegrams passed between the National Capital and the Capital of Kentucky; and in a little while Po, too, was free. It was understood that she was not to appear in Kentucky for five years—that was the only condition exacted of Elizabeth by the Governor.

Pasque still had time enough in which to report at his post of duty on the Kansas border. He was like one who had drunk of a philter concealing its magic drop of liquid fire. Only an atom of this, maybe, but it was in all his veins.

"I love her to-day; I'll love her to-morrow; I'll love her a thousand years!"

He was walking a little way into the country. What flashes of rose-light he saw all around the rim of the

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ky! As he strode along the path he felt his flesh tingle electrically. Something sweet and noble and terrifying rose up within him. A sleeping god was awakening. His spirit grew in leaps. All at once the sun seemed to him a thing he had beheld for the first time. He lifted his hand in hail of the sun. "I love her to-day; I'll love her to-morrow; I'll love her a thousand years!"

"Now, mother," said he, just before he took the train for the West, "it's understood. Po Groudy is to be looked after; she's to be educated. I'm sorry I've been all this trouble to you; but I'll make up for it—I will, indeed."

Since her coming, Mother Elizabeth had looked with searching eyes many times into the face of her son. She had seen that which pained her and frightened her. She had said to herself: "He's in love with the girl." Mrs. Le Butt knew something of human nature. There was Le Butt senior, for instance—he required management. Her household was a school in which she had long profited. Pasque's welfare had ever been a problem to which she had given faithful and loving study. So now Pasque's beautiful mother kissed him and said, with sweetness, very soothingly: "I shall be happy, indeed, to take this abused girl with me. You need have no fears about her—not the grain of a fear, Pasque."

Pasque kissed his mother and said "Good-bye."

When he had gone, Elizabeth's soft look changed,—first into a pretty blaze, then into a coldish shine.

"Yes," she resolved, "I will take care of her. He shall never have another worry about her, if I can help it—not a worry. I doubt if he will ever see her again."



Chapter XVI

THE FIRE-EATERS

A HERE was an onward rush of events. A thousand happenings disturbed the peace of the republic. At the Capitol it was a period of deadlocks, intrigues, passionate oratory, pistolings. Congressmen fought in bloody scuffles on the floor of the House; a Southern honorable struck down a Senator, paralyzing the most eloquent of tongues; a Western member invited a Virginian to an ouchillo love-feast in a locked room—bowie-knives for two!

The sectional conflict drew to the Capital rich planters, cavaliers run to seed, tall Mississippians with tufted chins, gamblers, pickpockets, men of affairs from the North; belles also—spa belles and city belles. The lobbies and faro banks were thronged, and there was a gay whirl in Washington.

About this time there were surprises for Eph. Eubanks failed, and Sproule secured Old Thousand Acres. But something else happened. Having in his troubles declined a loan from the Widow Archinel, Eubanks went repeatedly to thank her; and at last asked her hand, which she gave. They decided to build a big house at Oaks of Saul. The springs there had become so well known that Dr. Eubanks was having the water analyzed with a view to establishing a cure. Meantime they were married and went to Georgetown to live—an arrangement that suited Johnsey, who was just through West Point and who wished to be with Rhetta as much as possible before beginning active service. Mr. Coutts was painting a miniature of Rhetta in the white dress she had

THE FIRE-EATERS

worn at her mother's wedding. The face was arch and pretty, and so was the pose. She was budding finely,—forehead a trifle too broad; dabs of silky eyebrows; silky hair, all ashine, with blue bows holding each fall of curls; blue eyes to match; blue butterflies, also, at the shoulders. Poor Johnsey! Already Rhetta was a flirt. Cousin Pasque was her ideal, she said, knowing that Johnsey would soon join Pasque on the plains.

Before long Mr. Coutts and Eph were trusted friends. Eph's thrusts at "Marse Chock" delighted the old clerk, who in turn spoke his mind freely about John Brown and the Black Republicans and the Copperheads and the fire-eaters. They went together to the gallery of the House. An orator was arraigning the South. "She has devoured her soil's fertility," he cried; "she has devoured the bodies and souls of innumerable children of the earth, and now she would break up and devour the Union of our fathers."

"A lie!" came from the Democratic side. There was excitement and confusion. Many members stood up. "If you were a tadpole on the tip of the devil's nose," continued the same voice, "I should wish the devil to open his jaws and wink so that the wind from his eyelid might blow you as a morsel under his tongue!"

Eph wanted to laugh, but dared not. The Speaker's gavel sounded. The Sergeant-at-arms advanced with his mace.

"The honorable gentleman does not talk like a gentleman," said the orator.

"Because I am not addressing a gentleman," retorted the fire-eater. "I should classify you rather as——"

"A grunter, a shoat," suggested Colonel Le Butt, jocularly, not meaning to be quoted.

"A grunter, a shoat," blurted the fire-eater, catching up the words; "a plain pig, sir, in manners, morals, smell, and looks!"

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It was Le Butt's evil hour. The man with the mace arrested him as the principal in the quarrel on the Democratic side. That night he received a challenge. Sure enough, Le Butt was in a scrape. He had coarsened perceptibly of late. When Elizabeth married him he'd go wash his hands if a fly should alight upon one of them. With his pink skin and blue veins and freckles and fine flaxen hair, he was a man to look twice at. Now his pink was red; his veins were running to knots; in walking he stepped like a string-halted horse. He drank heavily after he had gotten the challenge and sent for some of his friends. They advised him to ignore the blunder of the Sergeant-at-arms and come with them and shoot for a while at chalk-marks by candlelight. Sproule counselled differently. There should be an explanation. Those duelling people were hotheads and sons of hotheads with no coolness in their lineage, but they would discriminate between a mere quibble and a rational effort to place the onus where it belonged. Unfortunately for Le Butt, Elizabeth was away—looking after Pasque; not until now had he ever appreciated what a support to him she was. Despite his fore-horror of blood, despite a promise made to Sproule, Colonel Le Butt, towards midnight, agreed to an arrangement for a sunrise exchange of shots. But Sproule induced the servants to ply Colonel Le Butt with honey-drams. He was an hour late at the rendezvous, and stood disgraced.

A few of Le Butt's friends, including the President, defended him; but he lost favor with the fire-eaters. Elizabeth returned to Washington to find that her husband had resigned his seat in Congress and accepted a government mission abroad. That was why when Pasque next heard from his mother her letter was postmarked "London." Mother Elizabeth wrote not a word about Po.

But Pasque still loved Po. Nothing could put her out

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of his mind. She had come within the secret close of his being, and, lo! she was there. Self-satisfaction; softly intoxicating day-dreams of a fair, pale girl torn from the dragon's grip; the sweetening sense of a triumph wrought in behalf of womanhood—these possessed him for days, weeks, months.

"I love her now; I'll love her to-morrow; I'll love her a thousand years!"

Just to put his face down in his two hands and think of her was as fine for the soul as an upward look at the blue through those pure white magnolia blooms in his own Carolina. But why didn't his mother mention Po, even only in a postscript? There were whole pages in her letters concerning Lady This and Lady That; why not line at least concerning her charge? How many times would he be obliged to ask as to the girl's whereabouts? Would she herself ever answer the letters he had sent her through Mother Elizabeth? And those people in the East. Here he was, at a lonesome post away out on the plains,—Kansas, thank heaven! was quiet at last,—with nobody to make much of, yet the things he wished them to write about no one among his correspondents would touch upon. There seemed to be a conspiracy to keep him in ignorance of Po. What! Would they dare?

Pasque's long suspense was relieved one day when Johnsey Sproule came. Johnsey was a boon, indeed, to the brooding lover. And he brought news. Unc' Eph's 'Sis Po" girl! Hadn't Pasque heard about her? Why, he'd gone to the Crimea with a party of nurses and hospital people! At least that was the impression Johnsey had got from Mother Marcia's talk a good while back; but lately he'd heard little of her; nothing, in fact. Actually, he couldn't even say whether she were alive or dead. Just as likely as not that Sebastopol fever had made her turn toes up. But if he had thought for an instant that Pasque was interested in her——

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Johnsey checked himself. The truth came to him in a flash. "Heigh-ho, Cousin Pasque!" he cried; "you dear, old sinner! And now I'm going to own right up,—I've been desperately jealous of you on Rhetta's account. It's all fixed with Rhetta, Pasque. Shake!"

From this time on, though Johnsey had slight personal recollection of Po, he fell into the habit of speaking about her just as if she were a distinct and lovable entity in his recollection. He did not mean to deceive Pasque, but he grew to be so fond of this heavy-hearted comrade—this true-as-steel man—that he made the best of every opportunity to praise Po as a girl worthy of the worthiest and a mate fit to sigh for and sing for and live a whole long life for. Then Johnsey would put his arms around Pasque and pull the ends of his moustaches and crack jokes and laugh and whistle his merriest; till by and by Pasque would go out with him, and they would run their horses towards the sunset, whooping for very joy of youth in close touch with a wholesome wild world of air and sky.

Pasque wrote to Mother Elizabeth that if the Southern States should not secede the coming fall he would ask for a furlough long enough to enable him to visit her. He was so frank as to say why.

"Well," drawled Colonel Le Butt, "I never knew but one problem our Peter John couldn't solve. I am going to invoke the aid of Peter John. I'll write him a letter, my dear, stating the case, and asking him to keep Pasque at home by hook or by crook."

Peter John set his wits at work. What had become of the Jetts, bound down the Ohio in a flat-boat? McQueal had told Sproule that Jett intended to join the Mormons. As a matter of fact, no one east of the Mississippi knew where the Jetts had gone—they had been swallowed up in the sea of the West, into which so many hundreds of thousands had passed to be heard from no more by their

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kin of the old colonial region. But Peter John was constructing a fable. The rumor that the Groudy girl had accompanied Mrs. Le Butt to Europe was wrong. Old Jett had returned to Frankfort just after Pasque's departure and had claimed Po, who had gone with him to Salt Lake City. Po was the happy wife of a Mormon saint, said the cold-blooded Peter John. Even Chockley Sproule was abashed at the lie he was called upon to transmit to Pasque.

"Oh, Johnsey, Johnsey!" moaned Pasque, "don't read me any more! For God's sake, stop! I can't bear it."

He was almost as white in the face as he had been just before his leap into the hackling-house.

"Look at the men running!" exclaimed Johnsey at the window. "Somebody besides us got news by this mail." He threw up the sash. "What is it?" he asked of a hurrying officer.

"It's begun!" was the reply. "The bell's struck!"

"Pasque," said Johnsey, turning upon his comrade, "did you hear? The bell's struck! *It's war!*"

"Thank God!" said Pasque.





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PART IV

PO AND PASQUE

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Chapter XVII

THE OUTBREAK

AFTER the fathers of the republic had breathed into it as much of their lofty spirit as they could bestow, they died; and then their sons fell into a quarrel, very bitter and sullen, and so long-continued that it outlasted the lifetime of these sons, and only culminated in the third generation. States, in sovereign convention assembled, now seceded one by one. There was profound solicitude at the North, yet inaction. Suddenly the needed electrification came.

Pasque and Johnsey, travelling East together, shared in the Fort Sumter excitement. Though slow to speak, Pasque fitly represented the exulting millions in the South; Johnsey, in his indignation, the millions in the North. Having found the Georgetown house deserted at the end of their two-thousand-mile ride, they went to a hotel, and soon hurried thence to Sproule's office.

"Your poor father did not tell me where he was going, Mr. Johnsey," explained Coutts; "but your ma and buddies are at Oaks of Saul. And your folks, Captain Le Butt, got in by steamer last week and passed South at once."

"There's a great deal of travel that way just now, isn't there, Mr. Coutts?" said Pasque.

"Oh, they're flitting—they're flitting! It's simply terrible—this commotion of ours. It overwhelms me."

At the War Department, Johnsey reported for duty; Pasque resigned. Their hotel was overrun with men. As yet there were hardly enough soldiers at the Capital to mount guard at Long Bridge, but a thousand office-

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seekers elbowed each other in the corridors and at the bars.

When they had returned to their room, Pasque took from his trunk all his keepsakes and reminders of West Point and the army. These, with his sword and pistols, he placed upon a table; and last of all he laid there his watch, upon which were graven the stars and eagle of the Union.

"It's good-bye, then, is it, Pasque?" asked Johnsey.

"Yes; these are for you—everything here."

He took up his little silk flag, unfurled it, and waved it above his head, kissing it as he put it down.

"Good-bye, dear old gridiron," said he. "Now, Johnsey, your paw. In one minute more I'll be a rebel; and then——"

"You mean that we'll be at each other's throats. But Pasque, old boy, never shall I have a friend so dear to me as you."

Johnsey sat communing with himself a long time after Pasque had gone. He only of his father's family was standing by the Union.

In Baltimore that night Pasque felt himself half-way at least towards Secessia. All through the land now the bitterness of a great feud was in the heart of the people; but here especially were passions wrought up to highest pitch. Yankee troops pass through to invade a sister State! Let Baltimoreans barricade every avenue of approach with their own dead bodies first! Even more pronounced was the mob spirit next day, which was the nineteenth of April, anniversary of the battle of Lexington. A Norfolk steamer had just come in when Pasque reached the wharf to engage a state-room on the outgoing afternoon boat. Chockley Sproule, valise in hand, came down the gang-plank and started towards the New York transfer-coach. He sprang aside when Pasque tapped him on the shoulder.

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"Oh, it's you, is it?" gasped Sproule. At first he had thought himself in the hands of a United States marshal. As it was, he wished to hurry on, lest Pasque upbraid him for transmitting Peter John's data concerning the Jetts and the Groudy girl. Sproule had expected peaceful secession. War? Heaven and earth! No old politician could ever see the necessity for war, except a foreign war, with its opportunities for plucking. Sproule realized that he had overreached himself. If he should go South, his Northern property might be confiscated; if he should remain in the North, he would lose the confidence of those who had just set up the Confederacy, and neither he nor his sons would come in for their rewards under the new republic. More. Habeas corpus might be suspended; he might be thrown into prison. A way out, at last. Sproule's chill blood warmed. He would transfer his Northern property to Johnsey. He would make out the papers, and Coutts should keep them. Johnsey need know nothing about it; but, if confiscation should be threatened, Coutts could step forward with: "Stop! these farms, these mills, these houses belong to a Union soldier." A masterstroke, thought Sproule. Another idea came to him. He would go to England, and buy up for the Confederacy all the saltpeter in the world's market. He would cut the Yankees out—smother the war at a pinch. He would pay for the saltpeter in cotton, of course. To be sure! exclaimed the statesmen at Montgomery. Why hadn't they thought of a matter of such importance as that themselves? Mr. Sproule should act as the agent of the Confederacy in the sale of cotton abroad. He could buy saltpeter, and he could buy arms and ammunition. He was on the way to New York to sail thence for England when Pasque frightened him. He had aged much under those torturing thoughts of the past winter. His once silky beard was no longer black; nor was the hair that clung about his

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neck. His eye-sockets had deepened. His brows were bushier.

"They want you at home," said Sproule. "You can go out from South Carolina in the Blue Cockades; or, if you prefer it, as major in the Homochitto regiment of infantry."

"Louisianians?" asked Pasque.

"Yes, Creoles. They've elected you already. Colonel Le Butt has taken his seat in the Confederate Congress. Peter John is going to the front with you as your body-servant."

The omnibus driver blew his whistle. Sproule put his lips to Pasque's ear and whispered a few words of Southern exultation. Then he said aloud, so that his fellow-passengers for the North all heard him: "But they'll rue the day they fired on Sumter's flag!"

As he winked towards Pasque, the wickedness embedded in the pit of his one shut eye and in the corner of his mouth was something to give Satan himself a pang of envy.

"The hypocrite!" thought Pasque. "How happens it, I wonder, that dear little Johnsey is the son of such a man?"

The boat was to sail at five. It still lacked of noon. The perfect charm of spring was in the air. As Pasque walked towards his hotel he thought less of Sproule than of Mother Elizabeth. It was his purpose to have it out with his mother as soon as he should reach Montgomery. He might begin by saying: "Mother, do you remember the young woman you took under your wing at Frankfort? What ever became of her?" No, that would not do. He would be merciless. He would say: "Mother, you've grieved me to the heart; you've broken faith with me. When you cast that girl away I ceased to love you as I had loved you of old. No, madam, never again——"

At this high-and-mighty pitch Pasque's imaginary

THE OUTBREAK

quarrel ended abruptly. There was a stir in all the streets leading riverward. Out from stores and workshops and warehouses came bolting a rabble of people. A roistering gang, roaring "Dixie," followed a blue palmetto flag down-hill towards Pratt Street. Pasque laughed at the way men, hurrying by, clapped their hands questioningly on their hip pockets; but the deviltry in their faces was not laughable. The focal point was Pratt Street between Centre Market space and South. The Sixth Massachusetts was passing along Pratt from President Street Station on the eastern side of the city to Camden Station on the western side, there to retrain for Washington. There were rails in Pratt Street, and when Pasque reached the scene some companies had already gone by in cars drawn by tandem teams of horses. The bowsprits of many vessels projected from the Basin over the street. Pasque perched himself upon one of these and looked up and down. A mile of roaring mob was under his eye. He kept down the animal that was in him. He had no sympathy with mobs. This was not the sort of fighting to suit his fancy. He shared the bitterness of the men around him, but not their brutality. His soldier instinct caused him to measure in his mind how many men would be required to drive the snarling thousands into their kennels. He heard the cry: "Here come the rear companies," and looked eastward. Anchors, chains, and like obstructions had been placed upon the track so that the cars could not be moved; but the troops had formed in column of fours in the street and were advancing. Pasque rather pitied the volunteers than otherwise. In their fatigue caps and blue overcoats, they looked like soldiers, and they were bearing themselves patiently in spite of sticks and stones and curses. At the head of the column walked the Mayor of the city. Blood trickled out from his hair and ran down over one temple. The cane in his hand seemed a magic stick.

THE ISSUE

"Clear the way, men of Baltimore!"

"A hero in broadcloth," thought Pasque. He wanted to clap his hands.

It was wonderful the way the crowd parted and swayed back, constricting itself like a monstrous elastic thing. The Yankees would get through. But, no! A soldier's gun went off by accident. Instantly there was a fusillade from the mob.

"Double quick!—Fire!" rang out from the head of the column.

Pasque swung himself down from his exposed position into the thick of the crowd. He used his shoulders freely; and, upon occasion, protected himself with his stick. But he swung with the mass, this way and that—now in the pack, now at the water's edge. Stones struck him; his hat was crushed, his clothing torn. He wished himself out of it. Then a thrill passed through him. Faintly sounding in the uproar was a woman's voice—a voice he was sure he had heard before. It came from the rear of the hurrying column. Pasque flung himself forward. Fiends as they were at that moment, those whom he brushed aside must have thought him an arch-fiend. Yes, it was she—it was Po.

"Friends," she was pleading, "do not stone him! Let him follow the soldiers!"

She was supporting and shielding an old man, whose long, flowing hair would have shown perfectly white but for the blood that bedabbled it. She herself was cut about the face and her garments were torn.

"Keep off, men!" cried Pasque. "Fair play! Don't hurt those two!"

Instantly he was trampled on, for the mass was surging forward. No one in the mob ten feet from its ragged front knew or cared who or what was in its path. It was a frantic, driving, overpowering monster now. Pasque got upon his feet again. He felt that a thousand

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pairs of hands were reaching for his throat, but he struggled forward and came up with Po.

"Let me support the old man," he said, panting. "At the first chance you must break through the line of people on the sidewalk—do you hear?"

Po gave a glad cry.

"Yes, yes, Mr. Le Butt, I understand; but I'm going to stay with this old gentleman."

"Keep to the right of me," commanded Pasque. "Crouch!"

Po did as bidden.

"Have you breath enough to run?" he asked.

"Yes."

Pasque seized the old man round the body and made a resolute forward dash. At last they gained the shelter of a car. They were in Camden Station, the chief peril passed.

"Who is he?" asked Pasque. He was on the point of saying: "Is this your husband?" for he doubted not Po was a Mormon, and very likely her companion was a "Saint."

"All I know about him," she said, "is that he's going to the front as a chaplain. I'm going as an army nurse. We met on the train this morning."

"He's Parson Bowling," explained an officer, stepping up; "and a noble old man he is. He's put the Bible into ever so many Indian tongues. He's spent a lifetime as a missionary in the Far West. The war's brought him East. He'll come to directly,—he isn't badly hurt,—and when he does, I'll bet a quarter he asks everybody in the car if they've seen 'Jack Bowling.' Jack's his long-lost son."

Pasque was not listening to the officer, nor to the mob without,—he was regarding Po.

"This is the second time you have done me very great service, Mr. Le Butt," she said, when the officer had gone.

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"I feel so grateful to you, as I've told your mother many times."

"My mother!" cried Pasque. The surge of his almost drove words away from his tongue. "Have been with my mother all these years?"

Po looked upon him in astonishment.

"Did Mrs. Le Butt never mention me in her letters to you?" she asked. "I was in the Crimea a long while," she added; "and later in the London hospitals. She has been a loving friend to me. It's very strange!" Suddenly her face crimsoned at some thought she had.

Fierce joy possessed Pasque, body and soul. He bent over her, his back to the window so that the stone should crash through it could harm neither her nor her charge, whose head was upon her shoulder.

"Never once did my mother write to me of you," she whispered; "and all this time I have suffered because of fears for your welfare. I have suffered the torment of fears for your welfare. I have suffered the torment of fears for your welfare."

"Mr. Le Butt!" she said, in a rebukeful whisper, "I have counselled much. But she could not check him."

"The whole matter is, I love you, Po Groudy," said, with vehemence. "I love you. I have loved you since I saw you in that court-room. I have devoted you in my heart a million times. I have suffered death innumerable because of my fears for you and sorrow over you. I thought you had become what the world became. The God you prayed to has not been with me. I have had torment upon torment—death upon death. Come with me, Po Groudy. We will go into my mother's presence, and I will say: 'Madam, here is my wife!'"

Po's face expressed wonder, sympathy, awe unspeakable. "Oh, oh, oh!" she murmured, cowering under the ferocity of his passion. "Mr. Le Butt, do not talk to me. You frighten me. Unworthy me. How sad you make me feel!"

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"You'd better hurry," cried the officer to Pasque; "the train's about to start."

Outside the mob was howling its farewell.

The two clasped hands.

"Good-bye," said Pasque. "I couldn't help saying what I did. I love you. I shall always love you."

The present Po was very different from the Po of the canal-boat. She had matured. She had taken on polish. There was a look in her eyes indicative of keener perception. She had seen much of the world, and she remembered what she had seen. Customs once deemed by her sinful no longer so appeared. She now saw beauty in objects the sight of which of old had shocked and depressed her. Actually, music of horn and fiddle was now a delight. It was not that she had grown overworldly, but that she had been brought to see much goodness in the beauty of the world. She had come to understand that many customs and much art reach back through the generations; and that these customs and this art survive through memorial love and veneration and the pious wish to be true to the ancient blood. In a word, Po had grown in mind; and could see now why people had been hostile in the old days when she had tried to save them from what then seemed only evil and eternal sorrow. And did she feel shame at these errors of hers? Very great shame. She would look back along the line of her life and single out some offence against reason, some fantastic act, some intrusion into the soul of another,—Po would recall such incidents and a wave of shame would rise about her temples and dye her forehead to the roots of her hair and sink to her breast, heaving now with a purer emotion. In her bethel-boating days Po's hands had been rough—calloused at all seasons; now red in the tub, now purple in the pinching air; again torn and bleeding, as at the hackling-house. But at this time they were soft, fair, caressing hands; white, pink-

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nailed, sweet as if exuding balsam,—long, shapely, pliant hands. They had learned the art of soothing, the gentle touch, the magic that wounded men love. Not in vain had been Po's years in the hospitals of Scutari and Sebastopol; and as her hands had softened, so had her whole nature,—so had the soul of this Little Sister of the Dying.

After Pasque had gone, Po sat in a daze. The surgeon came and dressed Parson Bowling's wound. She soothed the old man to sleep; but she could not think of him, nor of the noisy Massachusetts men. She could think only of Pasque. Pasque had struck her a blow. Often had she fondly thought of the union of young people whom God had made for each other. The marriage ordinance was holy in her eyes. But she had deemed herself set apart for a life-work. The spirit had come down upon her; and it was her wish and will to give herself up to the service she loved. Therefore, Pasque's revelation grieved her; broke in upon her peace; made her ashamed, afraid, fearful that she had already sinned. Then, while this shame was coloring her cheeks, there came over her an overpowering sense of pity. He had loved her all this time—all these years he had kept her in his heart! Sweetness crept over her; an irresistible upwelling of joy; a delicious balm from the soul and of the soul.

Happy Po! Sorrowful Po! For, in the passing of the scantiest bit of time, she was in tears; praying that God would forgive her if He deemed that lapsing moment sinful. No, no, no! She must not become fond-hearted! Had not war begun? Here, in her arms, was a grand-sire with his body maimed. She kissed him on the forehead and smoothed his hair.

"Poor lady!" said a soldier who was passing; "is your grandfather badly hurt? Don't cry. We're coming into Washington now."



Chapter XVIII

OAKS OF SAUL

THIS April, '61, was the most memorable month in the history of the Union, which was then seventy-two years old,—“my own age to a day,” said Dr. Eubanks; “and, like me, I fear, about to die.” Few men were so heartsore over the break-up as he. No one had labored longer or more zealously to prevent it. Eph made much of a singular fact in this connection. At the time of the Harper’s Ferry raid “Marsh John” had been summoned from Oaks of Saul to treat the wounded. Thus, oddly enough, both he and Eph, who were in Nat’s War in Southside Virginia, also took part in John Brown’s War on the north side. As they had seen Nat hanged, so they saw John Brown hanged. In Eph’s belief, it boded no good for certain parts of Virginia that “Ossawatomie” should have stood facing the Valleys of the Shenandoah, Rappahannock, and James when the trap fell; just as Nat had stood looking thither when he went down. Superstitious Eph. Prescient Eph. Nobody else would have thought of the matter.

Eph declared that Nat’s spirit had got into John Brown. “Des lac’ ole Mis’ Betsey’s done git inter her darter. Mis’ Belle she’s sho’ly Secesh! Dey didn’ fall out,—her an’ Marse John,—dey des split erpart saft en easy, en es perlite es pie.”

In beauty of person Belle was almost as charming as ever. She was said to have the handsomest neck in Virginia. It was cream white, from the ears down. Many men preferred mother to daughter as a treat for the eye, though Rhettta was confessedly pretty. Unlike his

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wife, Eubanks bore the stamp of time. Age or worry or both, had forced a shuffle into a walk once firm and free; and his face was lined and chalky.

While Belle held Secession Court at the Oaks, Eubanks continued his peace efforts. But what was the use for him to go down to Washington and whisper into great hairy ears, even if he did occasionally talk tears into the eyes of men who likewise loved the Union? What was to be gained by pleading with "Uncle Jimmie" Buchanan, who always walked with his head hanging heavily sideways, as though his ballast had slipped with too much riding of storms of state? Even while the Confederacy was forming, Eubanks's zeal drove him from Washington to Richmond and from Richmond to Washington. He threw himself into his last campaign with all his heart and soul. "But des es soon es Ferginny break off, wid er monst'us loud crack lac' er cak ob ice, Marse John keel ober."

The day news came of Virginia's breaking off, Johnsey appeared at the Oaks. He knew at once from Mother Marcia's wan appearance, and by the way she trembled when she embraced him, that she had been hunting the future through at midnight, and finding the seeds of sorrow there. Hand in hand they talked of the dispersal of the family and of Johnsey's own affairs.

"How is it with *her*?" asked Johnsey, hearing Rhett come singing down the stairs. That the two might be by themselves awhile, Marcia vanished. When Rhett reached the threshold and caught sight of Johnsey she sprang forward, leaped into his arms, and fondled him to his heart's content. Fear left Johnsey instantly. How he had wronged this loving girl whom he had thought capable of breaking her vows. How she fluttered and played about him, whipping him and patting him and taking him to task because he had not come to her as once as soon as he had gotten eastward of the mountains

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"Duty? duty? And to whom or to what, sir, is your first duty if not to me? See these eyelids, Johnsey Sproule? Aren't they thicker than they used to be? Unc' Eph says they are. Haven't they got red and ugly with crying over you?"

Then, as he caressed her with touch and look and word, happiness came down upon them; and nothing under heaven, as it seemed, could break their peace.

But Mother Belle, discreetly calling "Johnsey! Where is our Johnsey?" before entering the room, now took his hands in hers and looked him smilingly over. She asked many questions about Pasque, glorying in the fact that he had gone South at once; then she settled down with her work-basket in her lap, for a long talk about ways and means of achieving Southern independence. It was "Sic semper tyrannis" with Mother Belle. Johnsey saw that. She was surcharged.

Meanwhile, Rhett, balancing herself upon a footstool, with her hands clasped at her knees, expected to have a good time, too. Why couldn't her mother do as Johnsey's mother had done? Anyhow, she was going to talk. Not with her lips necessarily, oh, no! but with her eyes, shoulders, tossing head,—just as a silk-clad maid who was all life and beauty was bound to do when her lover had come across the continent to see her—yes, to fight for her!

Rhett looked first at the bare lapel of Johnsey's coat, and then at the Secession badges her mother was making.

"Oh, let me! let me!" she cried.

She sprang up, tossed the rosettes about, seized the prettiest one, kissed it, and made as if to pin it above Johnsey's heart.

What was it in Johnsey's motion—slight, deprecatory, appealing—that could cause such a transformation as now came about? Did woman ever change countenance, manner, tone more quickly than Mother Belle? From seren-

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ity to angry surprise; from haughty amazement to disregard. How the lines hardened about her mouth. Sic semper, indeed! In a moment Belle might have stood to a sculptor for a statue of Secessia.

Rhetta thrust the rosette into her bosom and turned her back upon Johnsey, mortally aggrieved.

"Come, child," said Mother Belle; "this is enough."

"Hold on, Unc' Eph," called Johnsey from the porch. "I'm going right away."

Eph was leading Johnsey's horse to the stable.

"Gwine er-way ter onct? W'at yo' talkin' erb honey? Dar hain't no sense in gittin' up en gwine r'fo' yo' got hyar. W'ats de mattah wid fokes dese da Hit's up en off, quicker'n lightnin'."

"Unc' Eph," said Johnsey, "Miss Rhetta has been in the war by shooting me out of a hundred-ton cannon."

"Sacked yo'! Gin yo' de slipper! W'at fer, in Lawd's name?"

"I can't turn my old blue coat for her—that's Good-bye, Unc' Eph."

"Goo'-bye twell I sees yo' ag'in, Marse Johnsey. My woan' dis mek his buddies feel bad!"

The "buddies" were, indeed, much distressed at Johnsey's defection. That Johnsey should give up the South was hard for the young Secessionists to understand; that he could give up Rhetta amazed them. Johnsey had long been their idol; they loved him just as they loved the sun or the sky or the air they breathed. Their part, they had already joined the cavalry.

"Supposin' you come face to face with him in a fight," said "Bud" Chance; "what would you do?"

"Don't know," said "Bud" Will. "What would you do?"

"I'd bang away at him with a blank ca'tridge, I reckon. I'd ask a mighty big mountain o' money to hurt him back."

Eph made bold to tease Miss Archinel about John

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"He's er wearin' de berry same kine er close yo' daddy wo'."

Sure enough, Rhetta's eyelids were red this time.

"Never mention his name to me again," she said, starting away. Then, turning on elastic toe, she came quickly back, caught Eph by the ear, and, drawing his head down, whispered: "You may call him Bonnyclabber. Let that be his name. Bonnyclabber's sour, Unc' Eph, but I love it. Never tell a soul. Kase why, good old darkey man? Kaze if she knew it my ma'd have me beheaded on the tower block in Richmond."

Just at the foot of the mountain was the rendezvous of the Black Horse Cavalry. Many recruits were coming in from Loudoun, Fauquier, and Frederick. There were young men just home from Northern colleges; fox-hunting lads from "Beechwoods" and "The Willows" and "Bower of Rapidan;" Knights of the Golden Horse-shoe—"Sic juvat transcendere montes." All through Virginia this mustering of the gentry was going on. Old histories came out, as did old swords and muskets and drums. Had a company armed with pikes and halberds marched up to the Oaks, Belle would have applauded. On the porch, where she and Rhetta were making a flag for the Black Horse, with a dozen cavaliers around, the crusades were talked about as if they had happened a little while before; and especially were the border wars of Scotland talked about. Eph saw the blooded people of the Valley and the Southwest Mountains on the day of the flag presentation at the camp on the plain. He drove for Mis' Belle. Rhetta rode "Lady Kit." This, indeed, was the very romance of war—knightly courtesy everywhere, music, a parade of troopers splendidly mounted. In one company every horse was coal-black and a thoroughbred, and every inch of trapping was as white as snow. After the parade, a tilt with lances. Rhetta substituted her gold bracelet for one of the rings;

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and she was happy when Turner Ashby bore it off. was such a splendid horseman—this leader of the alry; a man with all the traditions of cavalier gent—black-bearded, black-browed, black-eyed. Swarth nature and sunburnt from riding to and fro, he see a veritable Black Prince.

As the sun neared the mountains, Rhett unfurled flag. Then back to the Oaks for supper and an all-r dance, the whole troop escorting.

Half-way up the mountain the cavalcade met Dr. banks, in charge of an officer.

"I pray you not to permit yourself to be disturb said Eubanks, addressing Belle. "I have been seize order of the authorities at Richmond. I am charged having sent secret information to General Scott. accusation I have denied, but to no purpose. It great indignity—a gross proceeding."

When he had thus advised his wife of what had pened, he turned towards the young men who sat sile on their horses.

"In Richmond," he said, "I shall deny that I been guilty of any act of the sort imputed to me; I shall not deny that I am for the preservation of Union. I am a Union man, and always expect to be tell you, sirs, now, as I told your elders on the floor the Virginia convention: This Union will be here v not a thimbleful of the dust of those who decry it, traduce it, and arm themselves against it, could be g ered from the graveyards of all the land. Hark young gentlemen. I am sorry to see you getting r to go to war. War means dead men—dead men scatt over the fields, in the timber, on the hills, among clefts of rocks, in the gorges. It means more. It m interminable sadness, endless yearning on the par wives and mothers and sisters throughout the land."

Dr. Eubanks saluted.

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All the time he was talking Belle looked as though she wished to stuff a finger in each ear.

"Marse John," spoke up Eph, "ef dey'se er-gwine ter put yo' in jail, dey'se got ter jug me lac'wise. I'll hop on er hoss es soon es I gits Mis' Belle home, en ketch up wid yo' 'long de road."

That evening there was a diversion for the party at the Oaks. After sunset the vast of heaven was lit with a comet, which blazed forth in the west; head as low as the mountain-rim, tail sweeping the stars out as far as the zenith. A sort of awe fell among the fledgling soldiers who, crowding the porches, gazed aloft.

To Eph, riding on the trail of the old man he loved so much, it seemed that God must be lifting up his hand in wrath. Heaven itself was watching the world. Dead men in the fields, dead men in the forests, dead men in the mountain gorges. Eph felt great terror as, speeding along the Richmond road, he glanced backwards over his shoulder at the Thing in the sky.



Chapter XIX

THE HE EAGLE AND THE SHE EAGLE

“**C**OUSIN PO,” said Johnsey, once more in Washington, “you spoke of meeting Pasque for a few moments during the Baltimore riot. I’d like to tell you something about him. Shall I?”

“Oh, yes,” said she, unhesitatingly. But a quick flush overspread her face.

Johnsey was so intent upon serving Pasque that he failed to comprehend the meaning of her open confusion. He was looking straight at her, yet her embarrassment escaped him in his admiration of her beauty, now heightened as a result of his words. For him the charm of her face lay chiefly in her forehead and expressive eyes. The arch of her brows was exquisite. She had been received at Mr. Coutts’s; he was lodging there; they had met often and had speedily grown to be friends. He had told her of his rebuff at Oaks of Saul; she had comforted him, and now he was inviting an exchange of confidences.

“The simple fact is,” he continued, “I want you to understand and appreciate Pasque. You may think it strange in me to talk so, but I’ve come to regard it as a duty I owe to him. Really, Cousin Po, pardon me—Pasque loves you with a love that’s utterly beyond measurement.”

Hands in lap, head down, Po sat attentive.

“My excuse for speaking is that something separated you two and kept you apart a long while, and now here’s the war between you. To think that after years of heart-torture over you he should have found you at last only

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to be swept away from you in that terrible mob! Pasque's a martyr to love, if ever there was one. From my very soul, Cousin Po, I pity him; and so would you, if you knew all."

"I do pity him."

"And love him, I hope. He's the worthiest fellow that ever worshipped a woman; and you're the woman."

Wooed by proxy thus, Po felt again as she had felt in the car when the strange softness had come over her, taking away her strength.

Johnsey poured forth his tale of the many manifestations of Pasque's passion—his despondency, his endless dejection, the gnaw at his heart. "I know it's a piece of forwardness on my part to tell you these things," said he, finally; "but I hope you won't think hard of me."

"I don't. I appreciate your motive. It's pure kindness that actuates you, Cousin Johnsey. I can't say more." Her voice broke. Barely did she succeed in hiding insistent tears till Johnsey was in the street.

And now came agitation and a conflict deep within her. There was an old clawfoot table in the room, and she bent her eyes upon the grotesque claws, which seemed to her in the intensity of her feeling to be alive. How powerful in her heart was the desire to be loved! And how sweet to the flesh the flattery of such devotion as Pasque's. Yet the tenderness in her breast was at war with her spirit and reason, schooled to strength these many days and nights of thought and prayer. She craved that which was offered, yet sought to put it away from her. There were many considerations. Must she not await Mrs. Le Butt's sanction of Pasque's addresses? And, above all, must she not go on with the work she had set out to do? For the thousandth time she thought of Farrabee, who had been first to love her, but who, she doubted not, had conquered his love that he might devote

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himself to a great cause. Where was Farrabee now? If alive, did he still remember her? She could not but admire Farrabee; Pasque's qualities were different. When his passion should spend itself, what manner of man would he be? Alas, why hold them up in contrast thus? She sank back in her chair. Her eyes closed. Sweet compassion came over her and she suffered in the depths of her breast. A power unfelt by her in calmer times seized her and bore her along as upon a current setting steadily and swiftly towards the deeper emotions.

Yet Po's very next act was out of accord with the spirit of her fond musings. The old chaplain, who had also been at Mr. Coutts's, now no longer needed attention; so that same hour Po waited on the Superintendent of Army Nurses, a spinster with austere ways hiding the utmost benevolence. She cut sharp glances at Po, questioned her, and said, finally:

"My dear, come see me to-morrow. There's one place that's open this minute; but you mustn't take it. It's up at Georgetown. The Sproule mansion there has been turned into a smallpox hospital. The poor soldiers, I'm told, are without attention, except from rough-handed doctors."

"I'll go nurse them," said Po, eagerly; "I was through smallpox when a child, and I've nursed the plague at Scutari. Thank you, Miss Dix."

"My d-e-a-r!" exclaimed Miss Dix. "No, no!"

With her bony fingers she pinched Po's cheek.

"It would be a tormenting shame to me if I should let you go get smallpox. When I lay my finger on your skin like that, and take it away, I see a regular bunch of sweetbriers come. I can't, and won't, let a girl with a complexion like yours risk in a pest hospital what God has given her." She smiled. "There are a parcel of us who ought to go, and that's the truth. Goodness knows,

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a pitting would do some of us good. But you, child! I won't have it. So, there."

"I know the house," said Po, unflattered but persistent; "and I'm going at once."

And she went.

Johnsey bore no grudge against the government for its seizure of his father's house. He was too busy to think of it. At first the North had been slow to rise and there had been a famine of men, but now there was a rush of them. The parks all became camps, the public buildings changed into hives, swarming with blue bees, and on the beautiful moonlit night of the 23d of May the swarms broke over the river and seized the Heights of Arlington. Thousands of green troops were to be fed, uniformed, drilled, armed; and Johnsey, who was now on General Scott's staff, worked as he had never worked before.

"To change the subject, Mr. Johnsey," said Coutts,—it was mid-July, and they had been talking of General McDowell's "On to Richmond" move,—"I want to ask your advice. You know Colonel Le Butt's Peter John?"

"Oh, yes, very well. Pasque has told me a great deal about Peter John. I should judge he's the smartest darkey that ever drew breath."

"Your father must think the same, for he's engaged this extraordinary Peter John to serve him as an agent."

"And where do you come in?"

"Me? Well, Mr. Johnsey, I'm the go-between. Do you think I can be a copperhead go-between right here in Washington and look myself in the glass when I shave?"

"No," said Johnsey; "you'd be tempted to cut your throat."

"Exactly. I haven't got a speck of the traitor in me, Mr. Johnsey. I'm a George Washington patriot, and getting hotter for the Union every day. How do I know

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but these Peter John communications I'm to forward to London may help ruin this country?"

"Many plots are being hatched," said Johnsey; "but I don't see how anything Peter John could steal in the way of Rebel state secrets, or army secrets, could hurt us. Now, if he were stealing ours, that would be playing the mischief, sure enough. I guess pa's up to cotton speculation. There's a vast amount of it based on the war."

"A perfect fury of it. But you've no idea how treasonable I feel, acting as a go-between. Benedict Arnold must have shuddered in his soul as I shudder now. I'd be better off if I had more grit. I wish I was spunkier. Spunk is a good thing. Spink, spank, spunk I wish I were Ellsworth of the Fire Zouaves and Ellsworth me. Really, Mr. Johnsey, I'd like to enlist. I'd burn to be a zu-zu with red legs. Ellsworth. Yes, sir, I stick to it. He got shot pulling down a Secesh flag. He's as dead as a Smithsonian petrification. Yet I wish I were he. Spunk's a strange thing, isn't it, Mr. Johnsey? Look at General Scott. He's been spunky since way back yander at Lundy's Lane in the war of '12 and, though he's so old and fat he can't get on his horse, he's full of spunk yet. The war of '12, did I say? Damn my hide if I don't reckon he dates from the Second Punic!"

"Yes, he's a wonderful old man," laughed Johnsey "he's drawing an anaconda around the Confederacy two thousand miles long."

"Good God, hear that! Too heavy to get on his horse—hot hog's-jowl dinners, hot claret, hot politics. I guess I don't drink enough claret set sizzling with a red-hot poker. That's old Scotty's trick, they say. But to go back where we started, this Peter John business worries me."

"Oh, now, see here, Mr. Coutts, don't be a goose. It

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all come right. We'll use Peter John. I'll give the Secret Service people the tip——"

"But your father. We can't do what you propose and remain faithful to him."

"We're going to be faithful to the Union, Mr. Coutts. And now, while we're on private business, I want to bring up another matter. Are these transfer papers you have given me, relating to my father's Maryland farms, bona fide?"

"They are definitive and negotiable," said Mr. Coutts, dropping at once into his clerkly manner; "but your father knows you will not sell a rood of his land."

"Of course I wouldn't; but I don't feel they're safe in my pocket. You'd better stow them away in your strong box."

"Not a bit of it. They're just where they ought to be. If I were to try to keep them they might fall into some confiscator's hands. I got a shiver when I heard about the Georgetown place being pounced on for a smallpox hospital."

In spite of his resolve not to dream hero-dreams, Johnsey wished he could share the coming battle risk. From the Potomac, which washes the eastern side of Fairfax, the Union army of ten brigades followed the slave-laid cobbles of Warrenton turnpike and the old dirt road cut by Braddock till it had come within sight of Bull Run, which washes the western side of the county with the pure cool waters of many mountain springs. It was bolder and stronger by far than an army of militia, for it contained General Scott's "Iron Column,"—the Regulars and the Marines were in it, and so were many thousands of citizens who had reached the point of wishing to give either themselves or the Great Quarrel its immediate quietus. In ninety days they would be where old George Washington was, away up in Beulah-land; or else they'd be back home, ploughing, hammering, trafficking, and call-

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ing out jubilantly across the street to some lack-plu townsman: "It was as easy as pie!" City rowdies, country roughs, Puritans, Quakers, Knickerbockers, M Queals, Farrabees, and representatives of all types and kinds in the North were among McDowell's men. Had Mr. Coutts been with the army he would have gloried in it as a color study. Blue there was in plenty; there were militiamen in white, in green, in gray; red-legged zouaves passed uphill and down. Braid and button buttons and braid. Havelocks bobbed at the top of the hill, and havelocks as white as seagulls showed in the valley below.

And pressing on behind this motley army, as it moved southwestward between fields of waist-high corn, was something gayer and grander than a circus parade—a procession of carriages, omnibusses, tally-hos, laden with belles of Washington and high functionaries of Congress and the bureaus of government. This last contingent camped on the 18th at Centreville. Tabitha Ann, who was an invited guest, there drank champagne for the first time in her life. Her silly head swam, as, forgetting Coutts, she played the grand lady to silver spurs and golden shoulder straps. There was artillery firing as well as the popping of corks on the 18th, also an infantry fusillade. On the 19th and 20th McDowell reconnoitred.

Late in the evening on Saturday, the 20th, headquarters in Washington was almost deserted. The Commander-in-Chief dined heavily at Crushet's, and puffed a great deal as, on Johnsey's arm, he ascended the stairs to his office. A guard was about the place. Some orderlies were in waiting. To kill time, Johnsey, in the anteroom, burnt cigar after cigar. He heard the rustling of maps and documents on the general's table, but presently the sounds ceased. Johnsey looked in as he passed the open doorway. The veteran's head seemed altogether too heavy for the neck that supported it. Leonine it was

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that massive head; but now it hinged forward under the fatigues and burdens of the time and under his age and under his dinner at the French caterer's, and the spent hero's dewlaps and jowls wet his bosom with their sweat. Flies irreverently tickled him with the creep of their feet. So must they have done to sleeping Cæsar—pestiferous flies! specking virgin linen, crawling into the nostrils of General Scott.

"Pshaw!" said Johnsey; "he's sleeping off his dinner. I'll go get a bit of fresh air."

No sooner was he in the street, however, than a summons came. As he entered the office, General Scott's eyelids lifted, revealing great, yellowish eyeballs. But the lids slid sleepily down again. Backward rolled the great head. As it recovered, there was a snort. Then once more dewlap and jowls sank upon his bosom. But this time the general spoke, or, rather, he whispered audibly, like a churchman venting responses in a holy house.

"Conquer them? Ah, yes,—a Wolfe, a Desaix, a Hoche might do that; but I'm no longer for skirmishes, battles, sieges, fevers. Old Scott! Old Scott! Ten thousand years old! A dropsical cripple with a tendency to vertigo—shall he undertake to subdue fifteen provinces inhabited by old friends, children of his sweethearts, namesakes? They tell me there are as many boys named after me in the South as in the North. My God!"

Johnsey coughed.

But General Scott continued: "Oh, dear, loving Christ Jesus, forgive old Fuss and Feathers. Pity an old man who means well, and would if he could—he loves the Union, loves the Union! Forgive me, Lord, for marshalling the children of my Northern friends against the children of my Southern friends. Why didn't they elect me President? I would have torn this page out of the book—this bloody page!"

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"Sir," spoke up Johnsey, "I await your order."

"What, sir?" said the Commander-in-Chief, starting up. "Why do you pester me?"

He blinked at Johnsey; then suddenly remembered.

"Pardon me, Mr. Sproule," he said; "I am fatigued, inhumanly fatigued. I sent for you because I want you to ride to the front with these despatches. They relate to General Patterson, near Harper's Ferry, and Johnston of the enemy, who is confronting Patterson. Tell General McDowell from me that I send him my compliments and wish him godspeed in his undertaking. Go at once, sir, and with all despatch; but stop at the President's house and convey from him any message he may wish to send to General McDowell."

Johnsey mounted and sped towards the White House.

It had been a harder week for Mr. Lincoln than for General Scott. The President, too, was glad the army had gone. Now there was promise of a brief respite from harassment. He stood in his office alone. Through the window, where puffs of air smelling of the Potomac came in, he saw many beautiful red streamers across the sky. The gorgeous part of the sunset was invisible to him, but those softly-tinted bands in the South enticed him to the window, making him think of the flag so many men were marching out to sustain on this great continent here, where, even as there was one perpetual God, there likewise must be perpetually but one Union. Mr. Lincoln thus stood until the colors of the beloved banner had gone out of the sky. Then he lit a lamp and turned to a hamper of books brought in that day. He handled the books as if in fear of them—set them on end, one by one, on the long Cabinet table in front of him, as a methodical lawyer would place an array of digests, statutes, reports. All the books related to the art of war. From among them he picked out the Jomini, opened at "strategy," turned the wick a trifle higher, adjusted his

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glasses, and began to read. Over his face now came a troubled look. As he read he pondered. Directly something began to draw his lip muscles, and his lips pulled the slack of skin covering either cheek. Back went his head, out came a laugh. He was thinking of a rare old tom-fiddler backwoods yarn that upset Jomini's whole structure of learned argument. He clapped to the book-ends, lowered the wick, and stepped into the hall. The all-door was open, and on the porch was Johnsey, arguing with a sentinel.

"What's the trouble?" said Mr. Lincoln from the doorway.

"I have just come from General Scott," spoke up Johnsey. "He has despatched me to the front. He said I should stop here, sir, so that I might take from you to General McDowell any supplementary word or letter you might wish to send."

"Ah!" said Mr. Lincoln, placing a hand on Johnsey's shoulder; "you're the tail-ender, hey? The last train out. Come in."

While the President was stepping back into his office he talked over his shoulder.

"I guess I've said all I'm called on to say, and a good deal more. I'll let McDowell alone. He's read Jomini, hasn't he?"

"Yes, sir," said Johnsey, "I'm sure he has. Everybody up at West Point must know him by heart."

"Well, here he is," said Mr. Lincoln, tapping the book with the knuckles of one hand while he fumbled at the lamp screw with the fingers of the other; "for my part, I know more about Black Hawk than about Jomini."

Johnsey looked well at Mr. Lincoln in the fresh lamp glow: Tall, gaunt, bearded; with small, grayish-brown eyes, deeply sunken; lips protruding; a conspicuous wart on one cheek.

"Maybe you know Jomini by heart, then," added Mr.

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Lincoln. His voice was gentle, rather musical. "I'm just starting in on him to try to find out how soon **an** unnecessary war may be wound up. Seward says I'm making a mistake not to choke off the war before **it** begins. Chase says I'm an ox for slowness. Montgomery Blair says an army of ten thousand men, armed **with** laths, could go through to Richmond. What does General Scott say about the prospect of ending the war? Does he think McDowell will do the business pretty soon?"

"I don't know, Mr. President," answered Johnsey; "but I shouldn't guess General Scott would think or say a thing like that."

"What's your own idea about it—according to Jomini?"

"According to Jomini?"

"Yes," said Mr. Lincoln; "I'm trying to get at how long the war's going to last."

"It's hard to tell, sir," said Johnsey. "If you get together a strong army here, another in the Middle West, and a third in Missouri a year's gone. If either army fails to do what it sets out to do, another's gone. By the third year internal wear and tear in the South, and waste of men and resources and credit, and——"

"Wait!" said Mr. Lincoln; "I've already tagged off three years. I'm afraid you're Jominizing. A while ago I caught Jomini in an arrant piece of sophistry. My friends in Goose-Neck prairie would laugh him out of court."

"Mr. Lincoln," said Johnsey, earnestly, "it isn't often a man of my rank gets a chance to speak his mind. But you've invited me to say what I think, and I'm tempted to say it. In the push and whirl of this dreadful strife you may not have had the time or opportunity to see what a simple outsider sees. The quarrel is hell-deep, Mr. President,—if you'll excuse me for this breach of



"I WAS SPLITTING BLACK LOGS IN THE BOTTOMLANDS
OF SANGAMON," SAID MR. LINCOLN

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conventionality and language,—it's hell-deep, sir! I hope you'll make no mistake about it. I hope you will prepare for a long, bitter, bloody struggle. Only by drawing out and using the full strength of the whole North can you subdue this rebellion."

"Suppose you were in my shoes, would you do it?" asked Mr. Lincoln, looking into Johnsey's eyes, which in his excitement were very bright, indeed, emitting sincerity and all evidences of an earnest soul.

"Yes," said Johnsey; "I'd go to the extreme. I'd use a million men. The future warrants it."

"I get lots of good out of you zeal-ous young officers," said Mr. Lincoln; "but somehow you especially have knocked the bottom out of my peace of mind. I hope you're an exaggerator. Sherman talks like you, but Cameron says Sherman's crazy."

"I'd like it to turn out that I'm crazy," said Johnsey, rising and picking up his cap.

"Hold on," said Mr. Lincoln. "I haven't any important message to send to General McDowell; but, if you like, you may tell him a story. About the time I got out of my 'teens I wanted a grammar—I wanted it the worst you ever saw. I was splitting black locust rails in the bottom-lands of Sangamon and I wanted that grammar. The jay-birds talked pure Canadian French out there, and when I caught a crow and split its tongue the crow talked pure English; but *I* talked Sucker, so I was bound to have a Lindley Murray. There was a storekeeper up-country who had books to sell, and I learned he was collecting specimens to send East to the museums. I said to myself I would climb a big tree near where I was splitting timber and rob an eagle's nest and trade the young eagles with the storekeeper for a Lindley Murray. Well, I watched my chance when the mother eagle had gone off to get grub, and climbed the tree, and, in spite of the attacks of the he eagle, stuck the young ones

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in my basket and slid down. I saw I could beat off the he eagle with my club and felt pretty good. Part of the way down I stopped to view the scenery. I had never had so good a chance to get the hang of the country round, and took my time. Maybe I thought of writing a poem about what I saw. But just then back came the she bird, and both the big eagles made at me. When I reached the ground I was a badly demoralized poet. My young eagles were gone and I had to be sewed up. Good-bye," he broke off, honoring Johnsey with a handshake as he added:

"There! that's a Sangamon-circuit squeeze. It's a good-luck grip to you, my young friend; and it's for the whole army. If a man be where his heart is, then I'm with the army and in it and of it. Be sure to tell McDowell not to stop to view the scenery."

Johnsey went out of the White House laughing. An original genius, this long-boned, long-jawed backwoodsman. "Uncle Sam" wasn't a myth at all. He was in the flesh and blood right here at the Capital, only his new name was "Uncle Abe." Clearly now there was no mistaking Mr. Lincoln's character; it was of the fibre of the rails he used to split. Coarse-featured he might be, and countrified from his big boots up—big feet, big hands, big ears, big mouth; but he made you take off your hat to him. He did, indeed. No conventional insincerity about "Uncle Abe." Not a bit of it. Why, he had a dignity all his own, and a polish of his own; and you were bound to say to yourself: "Here's a man." Sagacious, too. "Sharp as brier," mused Johnsey, thinking of the cunning politicians Mr. Lincoln had circumvented in his time. "I'll bet he saw through me in a minute, and I'm glad I blurted out what I did about the stupendous job he's tackling. I wouldn't have talked that way to General Scott for a hundred thousand dollars. Ha, ha! Jomini *versus* Black Hawk. To own up, though,

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Black Hawk would lick Jomini hands down in a good, thick Virginia wilderness."

Thus did Johnsey weigh in his mind the man of the hour, just as millions were doing—some in execration, some in hope; and thus did he laugh to himself as his horse's hoofs plink-planked on Long Bridge, the moon meantime lighting the road for him towards Bull Run field. Smart galloping along such turnpike stretches as were free from army wagons set his blood astir. Very beautiful was God's world by night—firefly flashes, a heaven full of stars, an incessant shimmer of heat lightning from beyond the mountains in the west. To Johnsey there was something demoniac in this blink-blink as from a huge eye spying through darkness for full a hundred miles upon the hostile armies. It was a squint from the underworld—a dragon challenge of rebellion, wreck, ruin, deviltry. Gunpowder glory got into his head. He grew eager to get on. Hunching his poor beast with nagging spur, he vowed fiercely to himself, did little Johnsey, and made solemn promise in the moonshine over Fairfax that he would pluck a generalship out of the coming fight. But reining in to breathe his horse, and listening to the night music of frog and cricket and whip-poorwill, he softened all at once out of war thoughts into love, and great tenderness towards Rhetta took hold of his heart.

"This is Rhetta's Virginia, and I'm an invader," said he. "What right have I to think hard of her? If she assumed I'd follow her South, didn't I assume she'd follow me North? Come, now, idiot, be just—be reasonable. It's the war that's come between us,—just as it's come between ten thousand like us."

This thought recurred to Johnsey when, after passing the ghostly white tents of the rear guard at Fairfax Court-house, he rode in among the fires of the main camp at Centreville. Few of the men were asleep. Hun-

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dreds were busy cooking three days' rations. There was an odor of boiling coffee in the air. Surgeons were surrounded by recruits shamming sickness. But the soldiers whom Johnsey felt for were the thousands 'round the fires. Many were writing good-bye letters home. They, too, had sweethearts, perhaps. Each fire was the centre of a picture. It lit the faces 'round it and told tales on the volunteers. There were thoughtful faces here, sad in premonition, homesick; pale even in the ruddy fire-light. Boys accustomed to caresses at even so much as a hint of headache or heartache and to love and velvet softness had come a-plunge upon the great soldier world—Garibaldini; hard-visaged sons of Mars from every clime; moustached adventurers who knew everything and understood everything except, perhaps, the yearnings of lads with torn cockles and with that terrible sickness forerunning maiden battle.

A log fire was crackling near McDowell's tent; the staff was stirring; the portly general himself was up and out and at his coffee.

"You're just in time, Sproule," said he.

"For breakfast or a battle?"

"Both. Come inside while I read your despatches."

In the tent Johnsey repeated the President's parable.

"Um—well—yes—I see," said McDowell. "I know well enough what Mr. Lincoln's driving at. He means Beauregard's one eagle and Joe Johnston's the other. It's a pat hit-off of the situation—or would be if General Scott hadn't given me assurance that Johnston would be taken care of. The President means if I don't snatch victory on time Johnston will come screaming over from the Shenandoah, and hurt me so bad I'll have to be sewed up. Isn't that your interpretation?"

"To a 'T,'" said Johnsey. "You should have heard him joke about Jomini."

"Well," said McDowell, "what's the use of talking?"

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Talk's ended. I'm not boasting, understand, but I don't believe either Mr. Lincoln or Jomini could better our plan. I'm going to hold this Centreville base with my reserve. Tyler is to advance with the First Division to make a feint four miles due west from here at the Stone Bridge over Bull Run. Hunter, with the Second Division, and Heintzelman, with the Third, are about to move north to cross Bull Run at Sudley Springs. They'll take Beauregard in the flank. Tyler will cross as soon as the bridge is uncovered by the turning column, and we'll all drive down together. Don't you think we're heading right?"

"It's a perfect plan, so far as I can see," said Johnsey. "I've fox-hunted over that Sudley Springs country, and I'd like to join the flanking column."

"Certainly," said McDowell; "go ahead."

But there was delay at the start. Tyler's First Division, with a four-mile march ahead of it, blocked the Second and Third Divisions with a twelve. McDowell was vexed with Tyler, who, vaingloriously eager on the 18th, now loitered. Johnsey, too, was vexed. He thought of Jomini and "Uncle Abe." He was sure "Uncle Abe" would have given the right of way to the men with the long march.

"Listen!" he exclaimed.

Actually the birds were breaking out in song. Faint streaks in the east grew and grew, and soon flamed afar. The sun came tumbling up like a belated spectator at a rarée show. But hour by hour the troops of the turning column stood idly in Warrenton pike, which was naturally red, but now showed as a blue streak from Centreville westward to Cub Run. The adjacent fields were blue. Little drummer-boys sat astride the fences, licking moisture from their drum-heads and telling each other about the terrible masked batteries in the woods beyond. Finally, at six, just as

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Tyler, executing his feint, began a cannonade at the Stone Bridge, the twelve thousand flankers filed off into a forest path. No drums were heard as the column pushed due north through a six-mile wilderness. There was a hum, a rumble; foot noises, tongue noises. Deer sped away. Squirrels leaped from oak to oak. At last the head of column emerged from the forest and swung southward along Sudley Road. Country people on the way to Sudley Church stood in the fence-corners to see the streams of men and horses and cannon flow turbulently by. There was immense energy here, as it seemed to these church-goers—an animal fierceness that was new to them. At nine the flankers forded Bull Run and the Catharpin, each knee-deep, and halted in the grove by the old brick meeting-house. Everybody was hot and red-faced. The soldiers straggled to pick blackberries.

“So far, so good, eh, Sproule?” said the general.

“Thank the Lord we’re out of that cowpath.”

“We ought to have struck Sudley three hours ago; but you can’t have clockwork precision in a raw army. We wear blue, but we’re all green—a compliment to Colonel Corcoran’s Sixty-ninth. However, from this time forth the course is clear. We must drive down, gentlemen. We’ll drive down at once on Manassas. I’m anxious to meet my old classmate, Beauregard. Tell Burnside to move on.”

“Forward, Colonel Slocum,” said Burnside. “On to Manassas!”

“By the left flank, march!” shouted the colonel of the Second Rhode Island. “On to Richmond!”




Chapter XX

BULL RUN

THAT morning the gods just missed a laugh. Huge things that are grotesque tickle the gods; and for a time there was promise here at Bull Run of an enormously humorous happening. While McDowell was making his grand détour up-stream, across and down again, so as to strike Beauregard's base at Manassas, Beauregard was ordering a détour down-stream, across and up so as to smite McDowell in the flank at Centreville. But Beauregard's orders miscarried. Otherwise the opposing armies would have turned as upon a wheel, and by night each would have stood with its back to the other's capital. As it was, Beauregard lay inactive for eight miles along the Bull Run bluffs on the Prince William side, peering across for glimpses of bluecoats on the Fairfax side.

It is assuming much, however, to say the gods were spying down. Millions of mortals were watching the armies with the long eye of the imagination, but maybe the gods did not concern themselves. The scene was too human, the day too hot. The dew dried quickly; the sun waxed in power even before it was above the tree-tops; nothing troubled the blue heavens but the heat simmer and the glare and the turkey buzzards soaring lazily miles high. Ordinarily it is enough to put a man to sleep to watch a Virginia buzzard,—his slow gyrations soothe and mesmerize; the eyelids blink; cows, fly-pestered in the piney patches, jangle their bells; a distant loon drums in a way that makes for drowsiness, delicious drowsiness. But it is the buzzard that puts

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one to sleep in the sweet-smelling grass, tangling the senses in the thread of his mystic and majestic play.

The Bull Run buzzards knew one thing McDowell did not know. They had seen General Johnston steal away from his antagonist's front, cross the Blue Ridge, entrain his men for Manassas. Already Brigadiers Bee, Bartow, and Jackson, of the Shenandoah Army, were on the field. Soon the concentration would be complete.

"Ten to one it'll be nothing but a militia war," reflected Pasque, as he looked about him for Peter John in the mob of arriving troops at Manassas Junction. He smiled at their unmilitary air—the boyish innocence, the ignorance, the bravado. Belts were weighted with bowie knives; strapped to each foot-soldier was a huge revolver; actually, some of the Mississippians had come to war with feather-beds on their backs. Pasque was fresh from Richmond. He had waited till the last moment for his Homochittos, who were on the way up from the Gulf, and then, with Peter John, had come hurrying to the front.

"You're in hard luck to be without your command, Le Butt," said General Bee; "but, in one sense, I'm glad of it. You can serve me, sir, very handily, indeed. I'm anxious about the firing on our extreme left. Cannon just at six and musketry since. It's at the Stone Bridge where the pike jumps Bull Run. Listen! There go the big guns again."

"Rifled cannon," said Pasque.

"Infernal Parrotts," said Bee. "But the bridge is well defended. Evans is there, and so are Wheat's 'Tigers.' Exercise your mare, Le Butt. If it's a sham, scout up-stream and report later."

In the opinion of the "Tigers," Pasque heralded the approach of their friends the Homochittos, with whom they had paraded in New Orleans; so they welcomed him in the slashing near the bridge with a Jeff Davis

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yell. They were mainly Mississippi River steamboat hands and 'longshoremen. Some would die in battle, some by the knife, some in the hollow square. Fierce and jolly were they; but better targets than marksmen, for they wore red skull-caps on the backs of shaven heads, blue jackets, and outlandish black-and-yellow tiger-striped trousers.

Pasque talked with the officers; then rode northward, screening himself in the timber. A mile above, a disused farm road led down into Bull Run. "An old ford," thought he, riding amidstream. His mare thrust her nose into the water, snorting with satisfaction.

It was a rarely beautiful sylvan spot. The sunbeams seemed shorn of their heat as they came brokenly down through the foliage, for there was a bower here made by the spreading branches of beech and hickory which had moss and trickling spring water at their roots. Around were lichen-covered boulders, and a thrush whistled somewhere near. The magic note brought down upon Pasque all the love-fairies that haunted his own particular world. Well, now, go over that Baltimore scene, Pasque Le Butt,—go over it for the thousandth time. What was in her eyes when you told her you would have her if all the fiends plotted to keep you from it? What was in her eyes then? Any fool of a man ought to be able to interpret the looks of a woman when you tell her she's the one absolute, the queen-slave, the goddess perpetual.

Was it a "yes" or a "no"?

With the thrush whistling overhead, minnows nibbling at the fetlocks of his mare, Beauregard, Bee, Wheat—war itself—banished out of his thoughts, Pasque saw tolerance and pity and sweet yielding in the eyes of Po which came before him just as vividly as though he were back at Baltimore in the car, looking into them in the half-rage of his passion.

His mare gave a start. A snake wriggled down the

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bank, dropped into the stream, and swam swiftly with the current—head up, emitting forked lightning. Pasque searched the bushes on the enemy's side of Bull Run. An officer in blue lifted his hat to him, smiled, vanished.

Pasque forgot about Po in an instant. He blamed himself for disclosing the ford to the enemy. Should he return to the bridge and ask that a guard be sent? Nonsense! The show of prowess here was only a Yankee feint. He rode on up-stream as far as Sudley Church. No sign of the enemy. He turned southward, following Sudley Road.

Early as it was, the corn blades drooped. A hound, with tongue thrust out, lay at the yard gate of a stone house where Sudley Road crossed the pike. There was a valley here, with a branch in its bed. Southward, on a grassy plateau a hundred feet high, was Widow Henry's house—an inviting place fronted by a locust grove, above which towered an oak. Pasque asked permission to go upon the roof of the house, so commanding was it.

"Why do you people pick out my neighborhood to settle your quarrels in?" grumbled good Widow Judith, who was bedridden. "Sir, it's downright sinful. I'll tell you something. A bird flew in at my window this day week. I said, then, it'd fetch bad luck. Why, sir, nobody's been on my roof since it was shingled. Whatever you do, don't fall and spile my hollyhocks."

Pasque, fixing himself like a clothes-pin on the ridge-pole, looked back over the country he had scouted. It was a panorama. Ranging afar to the Blue Mountains lay a great plain of chocolate loam—a fair, rolling spread of earth, with clumps of forest trees, farm-house groves, stubble fields, and sweeps of standing corn. Straight-away north ran Sudley Road; straightaway west, Warrenton pike. The mile-long and half-mile-wide plateau beneath him was fringed on the south by pines. Not a soul was in sight. Indifferently he pointed his glasses,

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toying with the screw; then, of a sudden, fixed them—grew rigid, gave a cry. What he had mistaken in his first view of the field for smoke from a farm-house chimney he now knew to be a column of dust—ever rising, ever lengthening as it trailed southward from Sudley Springs towards Manassas.

"That scapegrace has torn all the shingles off my roof," complained the Widow Judith; "and he's ruined my flower-bed. Did he break his neck? But, there! Listen! Run out, Sally, the dominicker's laid in the corncrib!"

There was a cackling of hens and a barking of dogs. Guineas set up a potterack. But the sensation of Pasque's departure was momentary. In a mid-morning heat that was cooking ripe blackberries on their briers, peace came quickly down on Henry Hill.

Pasque's first thought was to speed with his news to General Bee; but, at Widow Judith's gate, instead of reining to the south, where the mass of the Confederate army lay, he tore his mare's mouth in an instinctive quick pull to the right, and ran the frightened beast straight up Sudley Road towards the Union column. At the Stone House he turned into the pike, and so sped among the troops who were guarding Bull Run bridge.

It did not take Evans long to post a guard at the rude *tête de pont* and change front with the bulk of his command; yet by the time he had double-quickened a thousand yards and had got his men in line facing north at the edge of a thicket on Matthews Hill, Pasque had returned from the quarters of General Bee, who bestirred himself at once—planting Imboden's battery on Henry house plateau and assembling there two brigades of infantry.

Thus at ten o'clock two bodies of troops, each on a hill-top, stood ready to dispute McDowell's advance. And now it must have seemed to the stupid buzzards ballooning like specks in the high blue that the battle-lines below

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were an inch or less apart. Were those dots down there schoolboys at recess, taking sides to play steal-peg? Or were they wise grasshoppers marshaling themselves to solve some mathematical problem?

Pasque was with the "Tigers," who were out as skirmishers, crouching in some corn. To Johnsey, with the Union skirmishers on the far side of the same field, the caps of the "Tigers" looked like scarlet poppies in bloom. A zephyr of hot air, smelling of the ground,—*"the devil's breath,"* field-hands call it,—fanned the corn blades between the skirmish-lines. Soon there was a puff of smoke among the "Tigers," and another and another gone as soon as seen. But it wasn't all smoke. There was a snapping as of fire-crackers in a tin biscuit-box then, instantly, a musical wild *whoo-ee, whoo-ee* overhead and a patter among the corn blades.

The Union skirmishers replied in kind. Coming uphill behind Johnsey at this moment were some galloping artillery horses, and soon he was aware of the forward rush of the Second Rhode Island. He heard the thump of a thousand feet on the sod and the rattle of a thousand canteens. Rails cracked and split as the men came tumbling over. They acted variously, according to their natures. A few were silent, but these were no less excited than the noisy ones. Each saw with a different eye. Each had his own thoughts. To many, what they were passing through would in time be a blank; to others, the memory would remain vivid to the end of their lives. Cannon opened, and now there was a din, with no pauses. It was an uproar, plus the shell-crack and the sharper noise of arms clanking together in the rush of men. When one soldier fell upon another, there was a metallic jangle, which the ear caught. Poor old Chapultepec Slocum! He was dying. His major was shot. Hunter was shot. The regiment flung itself back, leaving many in the corn. It was a gallant opening of the "On to

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Richmond" campaign for "Little Rhody;" but "Little Rhody" was much cut up. Only a woman—a woman in trousers, with a short skirt of army blue and a tasselled golden girdle, her hair flowing behind—stood her ground. She held aloft the stars and stripes and shook out the silken folds in the smoky air.

"Don't shoot her!" cried Pasque, as the "Tigers" approached the fence, which, however, they failed to reach. For all around the color-bearer sprang up blue masses; and though Bee advanced to aid the Southerners on Matthews Hill, they were beaten. Ever westward extended the Union line. Smoke thickened over the fields, all alive with men and horses and banners and brass. To the turkey buzzards, soaring at the peak of things, it now seemed, no doubt, that lightning had set the Bull Run forests on fire. An incessant booming as of thunder rolled up to them in the great vault. Those grasshoppers down below were going mad. No question about that. They widened their circles, did the suspicious buzzards; round and round from Frederick to Fredericksburg, from Washington to Winchester, they sailed. It is wise to give noisy things a wide berth. That's buzzard wisdom for you down from the ages.

In despair and disorder, and with terror, too, the Confederates drifted rearward. Striplings cried as they ran down into the branch between the hills. This was a pretty tale to tell at home, if they ever should get home to tell it. Some of them had sworn never to give an inch in battle. But it was no use. They were beaten. No more war. Secession was dead.

Pasque almost gave up. "A militia war?" he reflected. "By Jove, no! They don't run, and we won't. It's going to be an all-around bone-cracker!" His mare had been killed. Where was Peter John with another horse? Where was the miserable Peter John? Luckily, in the confusion of the rout, Pasque found a stray mount, and

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luckily also he saw General Bee, whom he followed to the top of Henry Hill.

From this time on, Widow Judith's was midmost in all the battle scenes. It was uncertain in the uproar from Imboden's guns nearby whether any more hens had laid, but the dogs had long since ceased to bark. They crept under the house. Not when their mistress was borne on her bed down into the nearest sheltering gully would the hounds venture forth. With the widow were her negroes, who had sung of Judgment Day so often that they thought of it now, feeling sure it had come. Because they lived on the road between Washington and Richmond, and because sixty thousand men had picked out their home spot as the pivot for a Sunday whirlabout, they were not to blame the least bit; yet their sins seemed black to them. If they had brought Missis' Bible! But the Bible was in the house. So to the house they returned and placed the sick widow on her bed, and spread a white counterpane, and upon it opened the Book. They could hear her read, for Imboden's guns were silent.

The red-shirted artillerymen were stealing away with their crippled battery from this part of the plateau towards the thickets at its southern edge. Cunning as they were in moving behind the widow's buildings, their movements did not escape Griffin on Matthews Hill. His Parrotts opened. Away went the outhouses, the trees, the shrubbery. The shingles from which Pasque had scraped the moss splintered and showered dust. Windows cracked. Weatherboarding was split into kindling for flames that soon seized it. Even upon the open pages of the Bible a shell exploded. Poor widow!—she was healed eternally. Yet not a hound came out from under the house. They and the Bible turned to ashes together.

At the point where Bee and Pasque followed Imboden into the thicket, Jackson was deploying his five regiments.

BULL RUN

"They are beating us back, sir," cried Bee.

"We will give them the bayonet," spoke up Jackson.

was an odd one, this Jackson,—a gawky six-footer; muddled, blue-eyed, given to the hippos. Once he was haunted by the fancy that his right leg was grow-longer than his left. At this moment his genius dried up in him, never to lessen.

"The bayonet, sir," said he to Bee; "go rally your men." As he spoke, he advanced his gray line into the

thick, riding among the fugitives, came upon what was left of his brigade. It was a fragment of the Fourth Virginia.

"Don't go, boys," he pleaded. "Look, look! There is Jackson like a stone wall!"

Some Alabamians crowded around Bee.

"Oh, you wretches!" he said; "you brave souls! You take on so hard."

Some other beaten soldiers rallied upon Jackson's line. Some, regarding, galloping up, planted the standards in front of the men, who moved forward to the flags. The rout checked. A lull came. The concave Confederate front on the south side of the plateau grew stronger minute by minute.

Some one now had time to look about him upon the mulch of men the battle had thrown off. They had fought themselves soldiers, but were not. They were straggling along the roads towards Manassas, bearing tales of irretrievable disaster. One man in broadcloth and top-hat whom they met felt strange emotions. It was the President of the Confederacy. Tall, erect, cadaverous, he clucked a "Tut tut" with impatient tongue as he pressed his gray mare against the tide of fugitives. How could he know in the thick of this panic crowd that the so-called Army of Northern Virginia was but winning itself? To him the day seemed lost.

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On the Union side was jubilation. The officer who had tipped his hat to Pasque was Tecumseh Sherman. Having crossed with his men at the old farm ford, he was now aligning. McDowell meantime galloped over the field, waving a glove in token of victory. Had he sought some spot out of the din and lit a cigar and summoned his silent thoughts the battlefield chessboard would have come under his eye. Then he would have moved his idle brigades in rear from all points forward. But his wish to push personally into the thick of it mastered him. The thing to do was to drive down.

"We're not stopping to look at the scenery, Sproule," he laughed, as he sent Johnsey off with an order that Griffin and Ricketts should advance their batteries to Henry house plateau.

Johnsey felt just as elated. He reddened under his powder smut at recollection of the way he had croaked in Mr. Lincoln's ear. When he delivered the order, Griffin darted him a look. "Advance to the next hill?" he said, in astonishment. "Are you sure? They'll kill my horses and pick off my gunners, and then my guns will be pot-iron."

Farrabee, who stood near, secretly bristled against Griffin. Farrabee was learning to be an artilleryman. He expected to keep right on to Richmond. Hence his joy was great when the batteries planted themselves on Henry Hill, the Fire Zouaves supporting. "Hang Jeff Davis on a sour apple tree," was his song, as the rifled shot screamed across the plateau, rooting and ploughing the earth as with the snouts of a thousand swine.

Suddenly the Black Horse Cavalry and the Howard Dragoons, *corps d'élite* of the Southern army, dashed out of the pines, bore down upon the Fire Zouaves, passed through them as a comb passes through hair, and, wheeling, returned with a few empty saddles to the point of their departure.

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"Southern chivalry!" mocked Farrabee. "I say, boys, this gun here is minding me just like a child."

"Attention!" shouted Griffin. "Troops advancing from the left! Give them canister."

Many guns were turned towards a splendid regiment in gray advancing out of the woods. The line came swiftly on. Red and blue showed in the folds of their banner, clinging to its staff.

"Hold on!" bellowed Farrabee. "That's the Second Wisconsin. They're dressed in gray, and I saw them pass to that flank."

The chief of artillery sat his horse a few paces distant. "Be careful, captain," he trumpeted to Griffin; "don't fire on those troops. They're your supports."

At a word from Griffin his gunners wheeled their pieces. The earth shook with the concussion as the cannon emptied double canister into the distant timber, instead of into the ranks of the Thirty-third Virginia.

Then happened something ghastly. At sixty yards the Virginia marksmen rested their muskets on the rails of a fence and turned the guns of Griffin and Ricketts into pot-iron. Horses and cannoneers fell under the point-blank fire, so that there was a horrible writhing on the ground. Shrieks arose.

By this one blunder all was changed. In the wink of an eye the wind that had blown south blew north.

Staggering down-hill, Farrabee met the Wisconsin Grays as they swept up to engage the Virginia Grays. A bullet had pierced his lungs; but, worst of all, the furies were in his hair.

At this hour—half-past two—began a series of hand-to-hand struggles on the plateau. Many times were the cannon retaken; many times lost. Thus staggering battle, with a thousand incidents, ate up the time till half-past three. The whirl was round the ruins of the widow's house. Nobody was jubilant now, though hun-

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dreds were drunk with gunpowder. The effect of gunpowder fumes in the nostrils of those who trampled the Widow Judith's fields was like the effects of alcohol. So fierce a *melée* could not last. At four there was cessation of fire; the black smoke lifted; the armies stood regarding each other.

Parallel with Warrenton turnpike a formidable blue line was forming. It was in fine order. "The hardest struggle is yet to come," thought Pasque. He felt a hand on his shoulder.

"Kirby Smith is hurrying up from Manassas," said General Johnston. "Go meet him, and guide his troops in such a way as to take that line of battle in the flank."

This was the rearmost of the Shenandoah brigades. The she bird was now present to the last feather. The men had come at a run for four miles. They speedily formed under cover of timber, advanced through it in perfect silence, and struck like a thunderbolt.

At sight of the gray host, the soldiers in the Union line raised the cry: "We're flanked! We're flanked!" In fifties, in hundreds, in thousands, they streamed to the rear. As yet there was no panic.

Nor for a time was there pursuit. Even the terrible Black Horse Cavalry failed to realize its opportunity. Of the Sproule boys, Will had come out of the charge on the Union Zouaves with a leg-wound from a bayonet jab, Chance with a bruised heart.

"Oh, you're a jack," said Will, as they sat their horses in Sudley Road, awaiting the bugle. "I never saw such a cry-baby. You'd better resign and sneak off on a blockade-runner and jine pa."

"'Whoso calleth his brother a fool is in danger of hell-fire,'" quoted Chance, solemnly.

"But I didn't call you a fool," protested Will. "I called you a jack—and you are. A great, big, long-eared jack. It's just your imagination, Buddie."

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Chance shook his head.

"No," said he. "I cut off Bud Johnsey's head, clean as a whistle. I saw an officer trying to rally the red legs. His back was turned, an', thinks I: 'Yank, I'll hit you a tacky-crack, you son of a gun!' He caught wind of the lick and dodged, and as he dodged he turned his face sideways up. Oh, Will, it was Johnsey! But it was all done so quick I couldn't even lighten my hand. I told Pasque about it a while ago."

"What did he say?"

"He said he never knew a sabre wound to kill anybody."

"There, now! Ain't that all right? For goodness' sake, let up. Listen! It's the bugle. That's the forward call. Let's go play Comanche after the Yanks."

Pasque felt it to be his duty to find Johnsey. So he and Peter John rode round the base of Henry Hill and up on the plateau. Some of the sights were ghastly. As dusk fell, Peter John felt in his pocket to make sure his witch-charm was there. At last they found Johnsey lying on the ground, near the scene of the cavalry charge.

"His wound isn't fatal," said Pasque, softly, with thankfulness in his voice. "Loss of blood has weakened him, though, and he's unconscious—utterly so, poor chap! The best way to help him is the quick way. I'll take your horse with me, Peter John, and fetch a surgeon. Stay with him till I get back."

"I wonder if the young gent's been robbed," thought Peter John, kneeling at Johnsey's side. "What's this? A Le Butt watch, as I'm alive! What right has a Sproule to a Le Butt watch? Important documents, too—deeds and such!" Peter John stuffed his pockets. That night, by a fire in the pines, visions of riches and life in some far West Indian isle where he could king it over men a shade darker than himself, with Sacristy Jane as queen, came vividly before Peter John as he stole

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glances at the precious deeds about which Mr. Co had been so solicitous.

And since mention is made of Mr. Coutts, it may added that he was at this same hour not far from field. He had journeyed down from Washington horse and phaeton after Tabitha Ann, who doubtless war-weary; and while searching for her had been trapped between Bull Run and its deep little feeder, Run, by a mass of fugitives,—infantry, artillery, alry, baggage-wagons, and goodness knows what Roads, fields, and woods were cumbered with the *jecta membra* of the beaten army. Cub Run bridge ford were chock-a-block. Whip-cracking drivers, trumpeting out of the bottom of his lungs, pressed along the road, and not until the crossings should cleared could Mr. Coutts and the ever-increasing thr of soldiers hope to pass.

Though as yet unstruck by panic, this immense ra was ripe for it. On duty since midnight, subjecte a seven-hour battle strain, overwrought, hungry, gr many with bandages hiding bloody wounds, no wor these thousands, raw to war, were on the qui vive phantom legions that might come swooping out of battle smoke through which the sinking sun showed a huge cannon-ball, red as fire.

"Oh, me, oh, my!" sighed Mr. Coutts, as, prim spruce in linen duster and new ten-dollar panama viewed the scene from his phaeton—now through eyes of a pure patriot with a country to lose, now thr the eyes of an ambitious artist with fame to win.

An ox lowed in Cub Run cripples. There was q commotion among the troops. It was almost a si pede. But the next instant a great mob-laugh a hoarse and derisive. Men nudged each other with butts of their muskets, chuckled, yawped, shouted. thousand scared by an ox! It was a joke on themse

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but too good to ignore. All felt better for the laugh. Fatigue and depression had locked the jaws of the sterner men. These found relief in talk. Officers began to hope that they might form the fugitives in regimental groups. But, no. The men would go to Centreville first. That was their rallying-ground. Once there, they would boil their coffee, find their colors, fall in, and face about.

Suddenly from the fringe of the mass nearest Bull Run a shout arose:

"The Black Horse Cavalry!"

In truth, it was not the Black Horse at all. It was a Confederate battery, feeling with its shells for Cub Run bridge. A caisson exploded on the bridge, which became choked on the instant with many wagons. Simultaneously, frantic haste at the ford caused the upsetting of a cannon. Both passages were blocked. Hoarse and vehement from a thousand throats came the cry:

"The way is blocked! The Black Horse Cavalry is coming!"

There was a tremendous brute dash of men in mortal funk. Down into and over Cub Run passed the great human wave, rolling on towards Centreville. Mr. Coutts was whirled along like a pebble in its curl. His beautiful phaeton was splintered, trampled on, ground under. He himself, quick to clutch at his horse's girth and clamber up, rode the beast monkey-wise by sheer grip of harness, crying, as he sped:

"Oh, me, oh, my! the Black Horse Cavalry! This is all your fault, Tabitha Ann. You miserable, vain, flighty, inconstant huzzy of a Tabitha Ann!"

The Cub Run wave started a fresh wave at Centreville; the Centreville wave a third at Fairfax Courthouse. Men as brave as any who ever drew breath were caught up and borne onward. Sherman, Logan, Custer were chips on the wave. Senseless? They laughed till the tears ran down their cheeks, but, like their tears, they

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likewise ran. "Scamper on ahead there! We're coming!" they said, knowing that only God could bring back reason to men's minds when once it had flown.

A shroud, not of darkness only, but of mist and rain enveloped roads and fields. In many places wheat shocks were set on fire to light the way. Near one of these Mr. Coutts saw Chaplain Bowling and Po Groudy.

"She's got through smallpoxing, I guess," thought Mr. Coutts; "and she's burnt her old clothes and made herself contagion-free; and now I'll bet a fip she's bound for the battle-ground. If that's her sanitary wagon somebody's made off with her horses. But you needn't stop to sympathize, Hezekiah. Up and dust, sir."

Near another of the fires Mr. Coutts himself met with a mishap. With his left hand a zouave seized the bridle reins of the horse that Mr. Coutts bestrode and with his right plucked down the rider.

"I am getting used to thunderclaps," reflected Mr. Coutts, admiring the zouave's audacity. "Henceforth I shan't be shank's mare. I'dad, as Hamlet said, I'll e'en grip the tailboard of this ambulance and trot on behind."

When the ambulance horses sped, Mr. Coutts drew his knees up under the wagon bottom and stole a ride when they walked, he walked. Ahead of him, behind him, at either hand, in the fields and woods, were multitudes of moving objects. Now there was a murmuring of many voices, now a rumble and low roar. The pale stream flowing on towards the Potomac was guided through the darkness by its own strange hullabaloo. Where the thunder was, there was the stampeding army, gorging Warrenton pike with its caissons, wagons, civil coaches, thousands of soldiers.

Mr. Coutts's fear was lest a wagon tongue pierce him in the back. A defile, a choking of the road on ahead jam from the rear might do it; besides, it was raining hard now and the puddles were bad. So, with a sudden

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mustering up of courage, he lifted himself over the tail-board and crowded in among the occupants of the ambulance.

"Ah!" he whispered, breathing guardedly, lest the driver should hear him or some of the sleepers wake; "this is better. Excuse me, sir."

In making himself comfortable, he had struck his elbow against a man's head. There was no response.

"Good God!" he muttered. He passed his hand gingerly over the man's shoulder, felt his straps, felt his face.

"He's dead!" said Mr. Coutts, shivering. "He's a colonel—he's dead!"

On the other side lay one who failed to warm a finger thrust inquiringly near his lips.

"Oh, me, oh, my!" moaned the intruder; "he must be a general! Edge out, Ki Coutts."

But he kept his place. At every jolt of the ambulance the colonel rolled against him. As it seemed, there was a fiendish jocularity in the colonel's claspings.

"Hello!" cried the ambulance driver, eying Mr. Coutts, when at daybreak the light crept into the space occupied by the passengers from Bull Run. "I thought you were dead! That's why I drove so easy."

"Where are we?" asked Mr. Coutts, faintly.

"Long Bridge. Capital of the United States of America, and be damned to it! The Rebs'll have it before night."

An hour later Mr. Coutts was mingling in the crowd in front of the White House. Everybody seemed dazed. Men high in authority were coming and going. There were wild answers to foolish questions. At such times the bars are down, and Mr. Coutts aimlessly wandered into the hall and peered into the room where the President was. Mr. Lincoln had been up all night and was now reclining on a sofa. His eyes fell upon Mr. Coutts at the door.

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"Come in," said he; "we're all here. We've been waiting for you this long time."

"For me?" muttered Mr. Coutts, stepping briskly into the room; "for *me*?"

The gentlemen looked him over and then glanced rebukefully at the President. It was as if they had said: "Abraham Lincoln could joke at a funeral."

Mr. Coutts was mud-covered and blood-covered. His ten-dollar panama was twenty miles away, but he still retained a few shreds of his duster.

"He's come to report our glorious victory," said one of the gentlemen.

"Speak up, my friend," said Mr. Lincoln; "was it, in truth, a glorious victory?"

Mr. Coutts looked around him. His face twitched comically.

"Mr. President and gentlemen," said he, "I will not say it was a glorious victory. I will simply say it was a great set-to. And so it was—a great set-to. Our army fought long, fought hard, fought well." Mr. Coutts paused, and again looked around. Then once more he addressed the man on the sofa. "The battle began at ten A.M., sir. By five P.M. we had given the Secesh a thumping that was awful. Nothing like it has ever been seen on this continent. In attestation, sir, lie the noble dead in the woods and fields beyond Bull Run. Further than this, deponent sayeth not. Yes, gentlemen, we licked 'em so bad we all started home as with one impulse to tell you how we did it. We thought of you all here in your palpitating ignorance, and knew you'd want to know. That explains much. It was our solicitude for you. About thirty thousand of us, personally and individually, each on his own legs, made a break for Arlington Heights to bring you the news of the licking old Bullygard got—prior to five P.M., gentlemen, prior to five P.M.!"



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Mr. Lincoln laughed. Others laughed. Regarding the buzzards: They circled wider and wider while the battle was on—above Frederick and Fredericksburg, Washington and Winchester; but when the sounds of conflict ceased, they circled nearer and nearer, and when the rain cloud rolled away they saw below them a banquet spread with prodigality. Also, if they looked closely, they saw a little woman and a parson working among the wounded there—working among the bodies with sparks of life still left, burying those from which the sparks had vanished. But the poor horses, which had no souls, Po and the parson left for the buzzards.



Chapter XXI

THE CONTRABAND CAMP

CONFEDERATE pickets on Fairfax heights now looked down on Washington. Pasque commanded at one of these posts. Day by day he viewed the Capital, and thought of Po. He longed to be with her. Under which of those roofs or trees was she at this moment? They fascinated him; so that, sitting in solitude on the hill-top, he spent hours, glass to eye, gazing towards them. For there the sky arched more beautifully than anywhere else, the haze was softer; all the good in the world was concentrated there. What were his chances of making Po his? So far as he could see, the war was interminable. An immense army was being assembled under General McClellan. There would be heavy battles. Any one of a thousand happenings might blast his hopes. He might be killed. She herself might become the victim of some chance shot. At any rate, she would see many noble-minded young men in the Union army, and would be seen by them. She would be with them in camp, on the march, in the hospitals. They would admire her beauty and appreciate her character. Pasque sat on thorns. Only after a struggle did he overcome an impulse to disguise himself, enter Washington, seek her out, and plead with her to pledge herself eternally to him. Then he wrote her a most passionate letter, to be secretly transmitted; but might not such a letter, falling into other hands, compromise her with the Union authorities? After he had torn the letter into minutest fragments, Pasque left his outlook and joined the picket-guard on the turnpike.

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"About an hour ago, sir," reported his subordinate in charge of the picket, "I had half a mind to call you; and should have done so had not one of the men told me you were busy writing. As it was, I acted on my own judgment."

Pasque yawned. "What was the trouble?"

"No trouble, sir. Two non-combatants who have been working with the wounded on the Manassas battlefield came along and asked permission to go through to Washington."

"Had they passes?"

"Certainly. From General Beauregard."

"Who were they?" Again Pasque yawned.

"One was a white-haired Yankee chaplain——"

Pasque was all attention. "And the other?" he cried.

"Why, sir, she was as sweet-looking a young lady as I've seen in an age—a Miss Groudy, I believe. Good God, Major Le Butt! What's the matter? Did I do wrong to let them pass?"

Unconscious of her part in this comedy of lost opportunities, more exasperating to Pasque than some terrible battle disaster would have been, Po was soon in Washington. Tabitha Ann had gone to a sanitarium to recover from her Bull Run hysterics, and Mr. Coutts would have been happy but for one thing. Mysteriously enough, Chockley Sproule's Maryland farms had changed hands. Johnsey could not have sold them? Who had? Mr. Coutts was in his workshop, once a greenhouse, on the garden side of his Little G Street dwelling. He showed Po a relief map he was making for the President's sons of the fortifications and camps around the Capital. Black as licorice sticks were the cannon he had painted in; white as snow the ten thousand tents. But his chief map was intended for Mr. Lincoln himself. It was a plaster-of-Paris representation of all Dixie, and

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was to show by fresh markings the progress of the war. Dr. Bowling was interested in the map.

"What a change has come over the North since Bull Run!" said he.

"I should say so," assented Mr. Coutts. "Down South things have got as lax and doughy as this modelling clay; up North everybody's stiffened. Whole companies are coming out of churches, Sunday-schools, factories, shipyards, logging camps. There's a hundred thousand of 'em here now—heroes, good Christian soldiers, sons of beautiful mothers. And thirsty? I'dad I should say so. If this thing keeps up, every rum-seller in the District of Columbia will eventually get to be a John Jacob Astor."

By this time Po and Dr. Bowling were good comrades. There seemed to be some hidden reason why they were drawn so magnetically to each other. And very soon the chaplain became popular among the soldiers. His face certainly commended him. It was a broad, brown face, cut with a thousand wrinkles; just like a wonder-work in bronze, indeed, save that there was life in each lineament—in the blue eyes, vigilant yet beaming, in the lips, the forehead, the waves of sea-foamy hair, which was very beautiful in Po's sight and most eloquent in the sight of all. Po saw that he was a magician in lifting up the spirit of the sick. Heartache and desolateness were the devouring enemies his presence drove away. A smile, an apple, a pat on the head gave many a sinking soul the upward turn in the hospital wards where homesick boys moped and moped, perishing for kindness. But the rollicking soldiers who were stiff against nostalgia made fun of Dr. Bowling when he asked them for news of his son Jack. A bugle-call was devised: "Have you seen—have you seen—have you seen Jack Bowling, O?" Jack Bowlings were found in McClellan's army, but they were not the missing Jack.

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In an Alexandria hospital Po discovered Farrabee. He was near death. The building was an old oyster-shucking house, uncleaned for years. In a single morning she moved the patients to a warehouse where the air was wholesome. But she had slight hope of saving Farrabee's life. Therefore, very delicately and gently and beseechingly, she counselled him to make his peace with God.

"Death," said she, with her lips close to his ear, "ought to be a welcome visitor."

Farrabee flashed her an old-time look.

"When That Fellow comes and knocks at your door," said he, "you just naturally don't want to get up and put on the white and go out with him."

"Hush, my friend," pleaded Po; "don't talk,—it will hurt you; you are panting now."

"You don't want to let the Old Chap in," persisted Farrabee; "you'd rather keep on moaning and groaning than try the little game of outfacing dirt from your hole in the ground. Ain't that so? I don't think I'd mind it so much in summer; but here now in winter, when it's so cold an owl can't hoot. Ooch! Excuse me, please. It makes me shiver to think of going where you've so piously consigned me."

"I didn't mean to turn your thoughts towards the grave itself, which is nothing," apologized Po, "but towards the life beyond."

"Ooch!" shivered Farrabee; "with cuffs on me—wrist and ankle, I might say. Chains on me; and a watery moon up among the icicles, and all the winds of heaven howling. Just excuse me this time, and rub me on the forehead again. I swear you're doing me good. I've got a hole in my lungs, and a hospital fever, and gangrene of the heart, and a few things like that; but since you've come I've taken a fresh hold on the slippery rope."

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"Don't talk any more, please," said Po; "you're weakening yourself."

"Strengthening, you mean," retorted Farrabee, talking by force of will, in spite of his gasps; "I've been told a turnip seed under a kindly sun increases its own weight fifteen times a minute. That's me since you got here. I—I—— Keep you hand there. Ah, you dear little woman, nobody has ever loved as I love you. I've thought of you ten thousand times since I saw you last. I've had lots of knocks, for I was with old John Brown from start to finish, but nothing could knock out of me my best of possessions. I've carried you around in my mind as some men carry charms in their pockets. Oh, it's a dreadful life I've led, but all the time you've been my comfort. A hole in the ground? Not much. I'm going to pull out."

And he did.

Po in time understood what it was that haunted him. There was blood on his conscience, because of his blunder at Bull Run. He planned to join Po and Dr. Bowling in their work for the Sanitary Commission, so as to make amends. He sent for Tommy Beeswax and his wagon and placed them at Po's disposal. Yes, he would devote his life now to the rescue of poor devils who might suffer in consequence of military incompetence. But as he grew stronger he began to wish for cannon smoke again. When McClellan moved he accompanied a battery belonging to the Pennsylvania Reserves.

Mr. Coutts, whose map now showed many Western battles, including terrible Shiloh, saw the grand army start by water for Richmond. The Potomac was picturesquely alive with craft—side-wheelers churning foam, stern-wheelers, tugs, schooners turned transports, canal-boats, lighters, any and every thing that would float—all bound down with chug-a-chug and toot and brass-band music; while deep in the hold and up on the deck

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id perched on the pilot-houses even were multitudes of
en, many so new to the breadth and beauty of Virginia
aters that it seemed to them they would like a thousand
iles of it straightaway.

Po and her Sanitary associates were in a forage tow
f scows and canal-boats. She would have liked to preach
o the soldiers going down, but she was surrounded
rith baled hay, and in the flotilla were a thousand mules,
hich brayed and bit at each other and kicked and
quealed and took the poetry out of the charming spring
ictures unrolling along the shore. Yet at heart she was
appy. Wasn't it just like canal-boating?

The forage tow waited in the Poquosin. Nearby, at
hip's Point, were some three hundred sail. The grand
rmy was moving up the Peninsula; meantime, in its
ear were accumulating thousands of contrabands, whose
argest camp was under the pines fringing Poquosin
shore.

The year of jubilee. Ah, yes, it had come. A revival
was going on among the contrabands. Along the beach
warmed the irreligious blacks, strumming banjos,
lancing, singing to an old fiddle-tune, "En de goose said
illigee;" but day and night there came out of the pines a
melodious roar.

"Hark!" said Dr. Bowling. Po listened. "Can't you
hear the beat of angels' wings away down under? It's
the true melody. It makes me rejoice. Doesn't it warm
your heart, child?"

"Oh, yes, indeed," said Po; "and I'd like to go
ashore. But, of course, we can't. We're to up-anchor
for York River to-night."

"Not till daybreak," said Dr. Bowling. "Certainly
we'll go ashore."

The meeting-place was a grove lit by many fires.
These disclosed some thousands of refugees. Numbers
sat upon rude benches placed end to end in circle after

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circle about the preachers' stand; others stood, forming an outer fringe. The scene was fantastic. In the shimmer overhead was a canopy of green boughs. Each tree trunk for rods around cast backward into the black spaces a brood of shadows, which danced incessantly in the flicker of the fires fanned by a breeze fresh from the Poquosin.

Po and the chaplain were guided to the central platform. Looking down upon the sea of faces, they were greatly stirred. Multitudes of men, multitudes of women with kerchief-bound heads; multitudes of pickaninnies—black, brown, yellow—shook their feet and swayed their shoulders as they beat time to the melody of the moment.

"We done cros't de Jord'n," trumpeted a cotton-head from the stand. "Owin' ter de Lawd en Marse Linkum we don rech de Promis' Lan'. All han's onct mo'," he vociferated.

A thunder of wild melody arose. Never before, as seemed to Parson Bowling, had he heard anything so sweet, so deeply pathetic, so heaven-reaching as the lifting, barbaric cry of these black women of the plantations. Unless it has come in at one's own ear one cannot conceive of this peculiar note issuing so often through the pines of Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia during the century past.

"A bird could hear that two miles up," whispered Po.

"God hears it, my child. God hears it," answered Dr. Bowling.

"En, now," roared the cotton-head, "hyar's er w'it brudder es is er-gwine ter preach."

Dr. Bowling addressed the multitude.

"En, now, hyar's er w'ite sister es er-gwine ter hold fo'th."

Po, lifting her hands for silence, said: "My friends——"

THE CONTRABAND CAMP

Instantly there was a cry as from some wild thing—
a shrill, amazing cry of joy. In the rearmost fringe of
contrabands, whence this cry had arisen, was a scuffle,
a struggle, an upheaval. A woman came plunging for-
ward through the mass,—through and over,—her head
back, her eyes shining, her wide-open mouth emitting
sounds of jubilation. Through and over she came, elbow-
ing, knocking her way along; climbing, leaping, throwing
other men aside, brushing away those who sought to stay
her, until, reaching the platform, she seized Po in her
arms, lifted her by the waist high into the air, and swung
her to and fro in ecstatic embrace.

“I’se fotch up wid yo’,” she cried. “Arter clim’in’
mountains, arter sailin’ seas, I’se fotch up wid yo’, chile.
Sho’, I has. Oh, my li’l miss! Glory hallerlujer!”

“And, blessed be God, it’s so!” cried Po. “My poor
dear Jule—my long-suffering, loving, faithful Jule!”



Chapter XXII

RICHMOND

AT this time Richmond on its seven hills was more talked about than Rome on her seven, or big London, or any other place in the world. And to Rhetta, who with Mother Belle had come down from Oaks of Saul to stay awhile at Aunt Elizabeth's,—Colonel Le Butt being in the Confederate Congress and having a house in Franklin Street,—it was a crowded and cosmopolitan and beautiful little city. The spring rains had freshened and beflowered it and filled the river with a flood which roared down past Belle Isle prison, where Johnsey was, making the war-boats at Rocketts tug at their chains. Martial law prevailed. Rhetta gloried in martial law. The guards in their gray jackets and sky-blue pantaloons cut a fine figure in her sight. She was fond enough of her "dirty darlings" of the real fighting army which had retreated up the Peninsula and lay among the negro-built earthworks just outside the town, but not so deeply in love with them as with the play-day officers who thronged the hotel lobbies and the elegant foreigners who paid court to her and her girl friends on Aunt Elizabeth's portico. Of an evening, Rhetta, in her pink frock, which fitted her as if stitched of rose petals and she the rose, simply breathed in honeysuckle fragrance and cigar fragrance and perfumed moonshine in the form of compliments, and was just as vivacious and happy and silly and flirty as her mother's daughter could be.

Meantime, under the lindens of Capitol Green squirrels frisked, unmindful of the presence of weighty men of

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affairs who talked of European recognition, the finances of the new league of sovereignties, the proposed cartel, the millions of pounds of tobacco dead in the warehouses under their noses, the battles in the Valley, where "Stonewall" was winning fame,—a thousand things, indeed, bearing upon the fortunes of the Provisional Government and the great future government to be set up between the Potomac and the Rio Grande. But most of all did they talk of the approach of McClellan's army. It was a monster army; it was drawing nearer day by day; its camp-fires already were visible at night from the Capitol roof; it must soon smite or be smitten.

"Unc' Eph," said Rhetta, confidentially, "I do hope that cartel for the exchange of prisoners will fall through. We've got our Bonnyclabber where we want him."

Pausing abruptly, she laughed.

"Now, own up, you dear old honest darkey man. You needn't make believe it isn't so. I saw it in your eyes, Unc' Eph. I caught a queer look—a *quare* look the moment I said 'cartel.' You thought I meant a kind of cart to haul prisoners in from here to Yankeedom, didn't you? Honest injun, daddy."

Rhetta's laugh rang through the house.

"Er kyar-tel?" said Eph. "W'at yo' gwine on dat way fur? Er kyar-tel. 'Coase I know de meanin' er dat. I hyar Marse John er-talkin' erbout hit. Hit's no mo' ner less den er draw'd up dokkymment 'twixt en 'tween. En I tell yo' right now, honey, I'se er-gwine ter do some whoopin' en holler'n fer joy w'en dis hyar kyar-tel yo'-uns es jawin' er-bout gits er-greed ter. Bonnyclabber's mighty nigh daid ober yander on Belle Isle. He's er-gwine ter go on ole Jehobah's kyar-tel 'fo' long. He's er-gitten' pizen'd in dat place sence dey 'gin ter jam hit full; en I specks he's cotch de sma'pox 'fo' dis."

"Really!" said Rhetta, suddenly serious. Then she went crestfallen away.

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"Huh!" chuckled Eph; "she seed sumpfin' tell-tale in my eyes en I seed sumpfin in hern. Bet er hoss she gits him out'n Belle Isle en inter de lock-up w'ar ole Marse is 'fo' dis time ter-morrer."

Eubanks was in Castle Thunder, which was a prison for civilians and persons under sentence by court-martial. His unlocked room on the ground floor opened upon the keeper's private hall. He had been offered a parole, but had obdurately refused to accept anything other than unconditional release.

Eph was right about Johnsey's transfer to Castle Thunder. Next morning he was quartered near his uncle, but in a secure room; nor did either Mother Belle or Rhetta look in upon or even ask for Johnsey, though they daily visited Dr. Eubanks, bringing him fruit and flowers and treating him better in every way than they had done when they were organizing secession at Oaks of Saul. Twice Johnsey could have broken bars to get at Rhetta, whose custom it was to linger in the hall while her mother spoke with Dr. Eubanks about his neuralgic woes and his digestion and his supply of snuff. The first time it was the Provost Marshal's dog that was to blame,—a famous fellow in Richmond, big as a lion, black as night, a monstrous Bavarian boar-hound,—which, roaming the hall and scenting peppermint, noiselessly ran the game to its lair and thrust a begging nose into Rhetta's hand. Rhetta's scream made Johnsey's heart leap. Not once at Bull Run had he been half so excited. Of course, he could no more get out of his cell than he could fly. But just then in upon Rhetta burst the dog's master. He was as odd a one as the dog, for he wore black knee-breeches with buckles and his flowing beard was black; and it took him but a moment, with cocked revolver in one hand and whip in the other, to cow the brute, which, however, got the candy and a pat on the head as well.

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"Dat critter mouter et her up," said Eph to Johnsey next day.

"Who wouldn't," retorted Johnsey; "peppermint candy and all? Miss Rhetta must have gone and bragged over her peril before every blessed one of her cavaliers. Lots of 'em have been here to look at the dog this morning,—'Jeb' Stuart and a crowd, and Pelham with some of his jabbering Mobile Frenchmen, and Monsieur Jules de Saint Somebody or other. Unc' Eph, it's enough to make a fellow sick. I wish I could have popped out and licked 'em all."

"Now, looky hyar, Marse Johnsey," cautioned Eph, "des yo' lay low, en feed dat dog on de hunks o' raw libber I'se er-gwine ter fotch yo' in Marse John's basket er vittles ebbery day. Hit's better'n peppermint candy. De guyard ter dis hall mos'ly lets dat dog watch fer 'em w'iles dey play poker; en w'en yo' gits on de saft side er de dog yo' kin sashay out'n de coop lac' er rooster wid crowin' to do on annuder dung-heap. Dar woan be no trouble er-bout er key."

"All right," said Johnsey; "I'll do as you say. I'd like mighty well to get out of this. I lost some of pa's deeds, and though I've sent word through Peter John to Mr. Coutts to be on his guard about them, I'm anxious to get North to forestall possible rascality. Peter John offered to slip through the lines and act for me; but, smart as he is, I don't believe he knows anything about business like that. A mighty obliging darkey is Peter John. If I do get through and you have any word to send me, send it by Peter John. He's going to spy for the Union."

Rhetta's meetings with Nero, the boar-hound, soon became mid-morning events in Castle Thunder. He fawned upon her, crouched before her, kissed her, accepted her blows with amiable rumblings down in his throat, looked up into her face with eyes of brute beseech-

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ing. Peppermint, beautiful mortal! peppermint and sweet palaver!

Rhetta's voice was uncommonly fine, and the dog knew it; and Rhetta knew it, too. So she poured out fondling phrases upon ugly Nero, feeling sure the while that all she said would hit the target of Johnsey's heart, and keep his love for her alive and warm. It would disgust Johnsey to hear her urge Nero to eat at least three Yankees a day. Of course it would; and he'd be mad. But that very anger, she knew, would pass into sorrow, and then the sorrow into sweetness, and he would moan to himself about her at midnight on his sleepless cot, just as she wished him to,—for she was a cruel girl, this Rhetta, cruel and loving; full of that tempestuousness of nature which might end in a laugh, if to laugh were her whim, or maybe in a dash of tears.

Sometimes Johnsey would smile to himself, reflecting: "The witch! the transparent witch! Now, *that* was not for Mr. Nero at all. It was for *me*. She's giving me to understand in the only way open to her without loss of Secesh dignity that she still loves me."

Something straightway would lift him as with fairy rope and tackle to the seventh heaven. Ah, thought he, never could he forget the looks of that dear girl when she permitted his first embrace; nor any motion of hers could he forget, nor spoken word of simple acquiescence.

"Ri, ti, tumpety-tum." Eph, with Rhetta's basket on his arm, was beating a tattoo on the wall near Johnsey's door. All was going well.

Then suddenly the situation changed. Rhetta began to talk jealousy into Johnsey's heart. There was a French count who had come over to study war from the vantage-point of Richmond and who was doing it by dancing his legs off. Another Lafayette, said Rhetta to the monster. She adored him.

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As Rhetta ran tantalizingly on, Johnsey found it hard to reason with himself. He was eaten at last with jealousy. His Bull Run cicatrice began to burn. It was an outrage. Now in tenderness, now in indignation, he for the second time could have broken bars to get at Rhetta. He went to the door, and, putting his face to the opening through which his meals were handed him, called softly: "Rhetta!"

But swish!

Away she went. Only Nero came and put his paws up against the door and whined for raw liver.

Enormous thunder crashes in the west awoke the city on the night of the 30th of May; on the afternoon of the 31st a heavy cannonade in the near east sounded like an echo of the same storm. Then the wounded of the battles of Seven Pines and Fair Oaks began to appear. The first-comers were powder-stained and bloody, but they could walk, and it was a pleasure for such as Rhetta to give them ices and cooling drinks. As she ministered to the wounded she counted on her fingers the handsome men whom she hoped would not be shot. One she knew was safe enough. God was kind to her that Johnsey should be cooped up in Castle Thunder. Next came the ambulances, and they kept coming. Belle and Elizabeth opened their doors to the wounded, and so did all their neighbors. Poor fellows! they groaned so, and some of them wailed without knowing it. Cots were placed on the pavement; shakedown were made in the very gutters. Trouble came into Belle's heart. Out of the fullness of her conceit she had hitherto thought of war as a most glorious thing. She had overlooked the butchery. Now she remembered her husband's words the night the comet lit the sky. And there were the guns again! That meant more torn, bleeding, dying men.

"Eph," said she, "go to Dr. Eubanks, and give him my love and tell him he ought to come here and help

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save these poor creatures who are perishing on our very doorsteps."

On the way to Castle Thunder Eph saw Dr. Eubanks in the street, sleeves rolled to the shoulder, bloody as the bloodiest, doing bold work among the desperately wounded. He kept on. "Ri, ti, tumpety-tum." He beat a tattoo against the door of Johnsey's cell. There was no response.

"Woan' dat gal cut up w'en she larns he's 'gin her de slip?" muttered Eph. "Ef she hadn' said nuffin' 'bout kyar-tel hit wouldn' er crost my mine onct 'bout ole Si er-kyart'n de daid erway."

Johnsey had escaped in the Potter's-field cart.

Rhetta was sorry that Johnsey had gone, partly because she deemed him out of harm's way when in prison and partly because she liked to have something in a trap to tease and triumph over. After the shock of seeing Richmond turned into a hospital had passed, she took up her flirtatious game again, and did all she could to break the hearts of the gallants of the army. She was now the toast of the cavalry. Will and Chance, when off duty, were her squires. General Stuart delighted to see her riding with them in his train; and he liked few things better than to challenge her to a romping gallop down some long lane or wood road. Her habit in these cavalry jaunts was of Confederate gray, and she wore a plume like Stuart's. They matched well, these two—Rhetta on her thoroughbred, Trix; and the gentle, joyous Stuart, one of the purest of men.

On the morning of the 12th of June Rhetta was mystified. No one came at breakfast to ask the privilege of riding with her. Mother Belle had given her leave to go to Ashland, and the day was glorious; yet it was noon before she found an officer journeying in that direction. But in Hanover County she overtook a thousand cavalymen riding north.

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Chance and Will welcomed her with beaming faces.

"Ain't you afeared?" they asked. "Does General Stuart know?"

Until that moment Rhetta had not thought of accompanying the column farther than Ashland. But instantly now the spirit of adventure got into her. Why shouldn't she? Mother Belle would think her safe with Ashland friends. She had threatened more than once to go to war, and now she would go.

That night she lodged in a village around which the troopers bivouacked, and was off with them at dawn.

How glorious it was to go by the bugle—trot when the trotting note sounded, gallop at the galloping blast! And the sweet, cool air of the early morning, the dew on the vines, the wild-roses—these were a delight; as were the thousand compliments and flatteries poured into her ear. It was all a blissful lark. Blissful until the sun drank up the dew and turned scorcher in the mid-heavens. Then Trix lathered and tossed foam-flecks, and Rhetta's face grew red, except where it was streaked with black. Dust rose in clouds, and hung over the line of march, and choked her. Pistols cracked on ahead, and there was a thunderous charge; and one of her dear friends was borne out of the fray, dying—his head back, his eyes very pitiful. Next a camp was looted; and Rhetta refreshed herself with some Yankee oranges, while she watched the white tents burn. Far away in the valley of the Pamunkey she saw the Union supply camp. Yes, it was so. She was in the exact rear of McClellan's grand army. Great glee of heart felt Rhetta because of the rare, the dashing, the historic adventure in which she was a participant.

Every moment she expected the column to turn back, but it kept on and on, her regiment in rear, and Trix lagging. Twilight came and crept into night. The moon looked down through the pines. Rhetta was glad her

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cavaliers had deserted her, because she could no longer think of bright things to say; in fact, had she not yawned in their faces hours before? Thus—aching from head to foot, hoping constantly to hear the bugles sound a halt, sorry past expression that she had been so foolish as to seek to ride with these men of iron—she was about to beg Chance and Will to strap her fast to her saddle when she came upon an ambulance awaiting her at the side of the road. There was a supper for her, and a big bunch of roses, and a bed in the ambulance.

She pillowed her head upon a roll of blankets and gave herself up to the full joy of the situation. True, there was jolting, and the moonlight in the pines caused ghostly figures to dance past in a weird, fearsome way; but were not Chance and Will at the driver's side, with the saddle-horses securely tied at the tail-board?

Chance and Will likewise had relief. The load they had carried all day was off their minds. Neither knew the other slept.

In a half-doze as she was, Rhettta became aware that Trix was misbehaving. She had never followed a wagon until now, and the two cavalry horses were crowding her. Rhettta heard a halter snap.

"Will! Chance!" she called.

In another moment she was out and running after Trix. The mare broke through a skirt of pines.

"This way, boys!" cried Rhettta; and then, as she seized the bridle-reins: "Trix! naughty Trix! How could you treat me so? Poor tired me!"

She was surprised not to see Chance and Will at her heels.

"But I'll overtake them in a moment," she said; and, mounting, gave Trix a vengeful slap and a sharp foot.

The mare sped into a road that bore away from the one upon which Stuart's column had passed.

"Those tired dears," sighed Rhettta; "they must be

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sound asleep. I'll approach softly, hitch Trix, and climb in without saying a word."

She broke off a twig and used it as a whip. The mare's pride was stung. She cut away in a dash, going deeper and deeper into the Chickahominy forest. At a sudden sharp "Whoa!" she stood on her haunches.

Fear fell upon Rhetta. She looked up at the moon, peered forward, glanced backward.

"Oh, Trix, Trix!" she whispered; "what has bewitched us?"

The mare put her nose around, champed at her bit, and whinnied.

Rhetta felt a creeping and chill of flesh. She listened. From somewhere, seemingly miles away, came a rumbling as of wheels upon a forest bridge. Nearer sounded dull hoof-thumps in sand. Cavalry! Rhetta withdrew into the low pines. A column was moving along this road as well as the other. So many of the men knew her, there would be no great trouble now. She would shield herself till the right moment; then she would ride out and join them.

On they came, their horses at a walk. The advance was within ten yards of her—now it was passing through a sweep of moonlight. Rhetta gasped. It was a Union squadron. She saw the blue and the yellow and the glittering sabres. One face turned towards her in the bright moonlight was so near that she saw its every feature; and the smile of the man seemed to frame an invitation, as if he were about to say:

"Come out from among the green boughs, thou pretty witch of the Chickahominy, and let's look at you."

But the trooper must have deemed what he saw an illusion, for he turned his face away and rode on with his comrades.

Perhaps other squadrons were following. Rhetta abandoned the road, reining Trix in and out among the

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trees till her head swam. It seemed that she was going farther and farther into an elfland tangle. There was soon a gush of tears, a tempest of sobs, a feeling and a frenzy of acute despair.

Stuart's men crossed the Chickahominy near daybreak, felt their way along the far left rear of McClellan's army, and finally rode into Richmond. Their feat was without parallel. Their commander's name shot up into instant celebrity everywhere.

Yet there was distress among the troopers. All had thought Rhett asleep in her ambulance. Not until too late had her loss become known. Stuart was chagrined. Chance and Will were the most wretched beings alive.



Chapter XXIII

PASSION AND COMPASSION

NEWS of Johnsey's escape reached McClellan, who sent for him and questioned him about Richmond. "I'll see that this Peter John is well paid if he furnishes us with anything worth while," said McClellan, at parting. As Johnsey emerged from the tent, an orderly pointed towards a group in the headquarters grove.

"You are wanted there, sir," said he.

Johnsey found it hard to believe the tale his eyes now told him. Seated on a rustic bench, with McClellan's aides about them, were Po and Rhetta. It was an animated assembly in the heart of a picturesque camp. The Prince de Joinville and other foreigners were standing, hats off, before the two women. Johnsey greeted Po, and grasping Rhetta's hand, exclaimed:

"You here? In the name of all that's wonderful!"

"There's nothing wonderful about it," laughed Rhetta; "you were my prisoner; you escaped; I come to re-arrest you."

At last she told him all. She had been found by cavalry patrols, and escorted to White House Landing. Po and Dr. Bowling, arriving from the York, were about to set out for the Fifth Corps hospital, and she had joined them.

"We met Miss Groudy in the Crimea," explained the Prince, "and, hearing that she was in camp, came to pay our respects."

"Yes, yes," said Johnsey. Lover-like, he had assumed that it was Rhetta who was being honored.

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"And Miss Archinel has been telling us of her adventures. Do you think General McClellan would permit us to escort her to Mechanicsville bridge under flag of truce? What have you seen in our camp, Miss Archinel, that you would turn to account in Richmond?"

"I should tell our generals I had seen many bad men,—so many of them, and so bad, that it hurt my eyes to look at them. I should say the Yankees were hiding behind all the trees in New Kent, Hanover, and Henrico. I don't know but I'd tell them——"

"Do you remember how we used to play blindman's buff?" interrupted Johnsey.

"And will you permit me to present you with this silk scarf?" asked the Prince.

"'Blindman's buff'! 'silk scarf'!" cried Rhetta.

The aides laughed.

"They mean you must pass through the lines blindfolded," explained Po.

"I'll do it, I'll do it," said Rhetta, ecstatically; "and the very first good old Reb I see when I take off the scarf——"

"Is to be your knight," laughed De Joinville.

"Is to get a good squeeze," said Rhetta.

General McClellan gave the necessary order, and Rhetta was led through the Beaver Dam lines, and thence to the bridge beyond Mechanicsville. The thousands of men in blue who saw the blindfolded girl on her beautiful mare wondered at the sight.

At the approach to the bridge De Joinville rode forward, waving a white flag. A Confederate officer met him, and, after a parley, sped back for instructions. Meantime Johnsey was driven to fond whisperings.

"How dare you, sir?" said Rhetta; "you tie up my eyes so I can't frown, and then run on like that. It's mean of you, Johnsey Sproule!"

"But, Rhetta, I may never see you again," he said.

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"And, sir, I want you to know I peeped coming through your lines, and saw all."

"The Prince is beckoning," said Johnsey. "Give Trix the rein. I'll see you over the bridge. Rhetta Archinel," he added, impressively, "it was Fate that brought us together to-day. Remember, girl, you're mine."

Rhetta gave Johnsey's hand a smart pinch, and sighed when she echoed his good-bye—which sweetened his thoughts very much, indeed, as he watched her join her Confederate escort and dash away towards Richmond.

Johnsey soon heard from Peter John. Jackson would join Lee, and together they would hurl themselves upon McClellan's right. "Poor right!" said McClellan, incredulously. Yet all came out as Peter John had foretold. Jackson was a day behind, but on the appointed 23d of June Lee crossed by the same Mechanicsville bridge Rhetta had used, and began the Seven Days' battles. He struck hard, and the slaughter among his Georgians and North Carolinians was enormous. The ten thousand Pennsylvania Reserves, who were in advantageous position, held the Beaver Dam line with cannon and rifle. On either bank of Beaver Dam Creek grew catalpa-trees in full flower, beautifully white. The battle roared on till dark. Then the din ceased, but the sounds that succeeded were worse than the din. Wails—tearful wails, prayers—agonizing prayers.

At the first outburst of battle in a quarter threatening stupendous consequences a thousand wagons had begun to stream southward over the Chickahominy bridges. With these were the Sanitary wagons, in charge of Dr. Bowling; but Po had pushed to the front in her ambulance, and now she was keenly distressed by the wails and prayers in the valley of the catalpa-trees.

"Oh, listen, Jule," said she; "hear them pleading for water! There's plenty of it in the creek, and nobody to take it to them."

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Union officers told her it would be foolish to cross the creek. She might be shot by pickets. Or she might be caught between the battle-lines in a furious night assault. But she and Jule waded the stream and began work among the wounded. Jule had many a time watered plants from sunrise till sunset, and now she worked till daybreak watering men. Po went straight at the wounds. Her fingers were just long enough and soft enough and skilful enough to go in and come out; and all night she searched for lead and stanced and succored, praying with those who were prayerful and smoothing the death frown of the wicked.

Near midnight she stopped suddenly in her work and listened. Then she ran up to two men bending over a Georgia boy, who was talking piteously as he died.

"Marse John," said Eph, "hyar's Li'l Miss."

Eph held up a lantern so that the shine of it was in Po's face.

Dr. Eubanks, with an apologetic smile, showed Po his bloody hands.

"I can't embrace you, child," said he; "but put up your lips."

Before sunrise the Union troops abandoned the Beaver Dam line and withdrew eastward for six miles past Gaines's Mill to high ground overlooking Powhite Creek ravine on the west and the boggy bed of Boatswain's Creek on the north, where at noon the thirty thousand men of the Fifth Corps lay sicklewise, their flanks bent back against the Chickahominy, awaiting the combined onset of Jackson, Longstreet, and the Hills.

Dr. Eubanks was still with Po. Failing to get back into Richmond because the roads were choked with Lee's troops and the fields barred by scores of regiments in heavy battle-front, he had accompanied her eastward for some miles to a deserted dwelling of which she knew. Here they bathed and rested. An enormous body of

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Confederate troops swept across the distant fields to the south. Otherwise there was no sign of impending battle. Seated with her on the porch, Dr. Eubanks questioned Po sympathetically about herself a long while, and then talked of the happy days at Ballast Creek; but towards noon the old man's chin fell among his ruffles. Po wandered into the garden, where blossomed phlox and pinks and black-eyed susans, and treated herself to the soothing things she loved—particularly the hum of honeybees and the sleepy boom of the dear, gold old June bugs among the sugar corn. As she sat in the rose-arbor she heard Eph singing in a cherry-tree. Soon his voice sounded faint and far. His song came not from the top of the tree, but from beyond the soft fleece clouds in the sky. Yes, she thought, Eph was up so high he must be going to heaven. God had taken him just as He had taken those poor, beautiful boys of Ripley's brigade and Pender's. It was piteous—the way they had pleaded with her for water, and love, and a touch of the hand. One pair of beseeching eyes would haunt her always. He was torn in two, dear heart, yet exceedingly gentle, and he had thanked her in most courteous speech. That was somebody's Pasque—oh, yes! And she had seen many Pasques among the catalpas. They were out of their pitiful state of blood now, and away and away. It seemed amazing to Po that men could think of hurrying the unredeemed souls out of the bodies of their brothers by means of bullets and hurtling shell scraps. When Death meant Hell, what a crime it was to kill! With the bees humming drowsily, the light went out of Po's eyes; her hands lay limp at her sides, her head pillowed back among the roses.

Eph hadn't gone to heaven at all. He was listening to battle rumbles in the direction of Gaines's Mill, and scolding the robins.

"Wha' fer yo' sassin' me?" he asked. "W'at yo'

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cussin' me fer? I doan want 'er be cust. I wants dese yar ox-hearts, an I'se er-gwinter hab 'em."

He tossed a handful of cherries into his mouth, and shot out the pits, which pattered down in a shower among the leaves. Happening to glance northward, he opened his eyes in wonder. Beulah Church Road was filled with a seemingly endless column of Confederate infantry. They were marching at the route step four abreast, and were sweeping along with the swift, gliding motion peculiar to Jackson's "foot cavalry." Eph slid down the tree, and ran across the lawn.

At the gate stood Eubanks. In the road was General Jackson, sitting his sorrel at the head of his staff, his blue eyes looking out from under a cap-brim drawn down on a line with his brows.

"And so you can't guide us," said he, impatiently. "You don't know the approaches to the Chickahominy? I'm strongly of the opinion, sir, that you are pleased at your inability to serve us."

"I'm for the Union, if that's what you mean," said Eubanks, with a bow.

Eph stepped forward in defence of his master, and was about to explain what had happened the night before when an officer with brownish-hazel eyes, gray-bearded, gray-haired, and on a gray horse drew near, and lifting his hat to Eubanks, spoke a whispered word to Jackson. It was General Lee on Traveller. Jackson smiled, gave Eubanks a sharp look and a quick nod, hunched his sorrel with his heel, and passed forward, joggety-jog, awkwardly as was his wont, just as the van of his army reached the gate.

It was a river of men,—the rough, the gentle, the bearded, the beardless; the silent, the noisy; ragged, dust-covered, grimy, brown with sunburn,—all flowing along in an endless torrent. On ahead they were deploying in the scrub pines. Presently there was a halt. The

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men sprawled about in the grass on either side of the road. Some of them chattered in mocking-bird French, and Eph recognized the Louisiana Brigade. He thought of Pasque, and at that instant Pasque hugged him from behind. The meeting of the two was so boisterous that some of the Creoles got up and looked over the fence, laughing. Pasque was popular with the Creoles. So they grinned, and hoped their brave commander would get a good julep at the house towards which he was hurrying with the old darkey.

But Pasque was not thinking of juleps. Hard thumps his heart gave him. In a hurry was he, as he broke away from his men—feeling like a culprit, thinking of the terrible Jackson, yet determined to see Po. And there she was. Tens of thousands were near; not a soul in sight. Just below the sunburn mark on her neck he saw a full blue vein and a pulsation. Did he dare? Very boldly Pasque bent over her, holding his breath, holding his heart. Touched! Bliss was Pasque's; rapture, sweet elation. Then he stood silently before her, feeding a long hunger as he gazed.

"Yaas, suh," bellowed Eph, "she's sommers hyar in de gyarden, sho'."

Po opened her eyes, bewildered. Then she gave a cry like a bird's. Fresh in her mind was a nightmare dream of Pasque. He had been shot in two at Beaver Dam, and a surgeon was bending over him, saying: "Pesky business is war. Horrible, horrible! Hand me my saw." And now, when she saw the real Pasque standing before her,—his hands extended, love in his looks,—joy arose within her and into her face sprang a welcome he could not mistake.

"Oh, Pasque Le Butt!" she cried; "what a dream I've had of you! And now here you are, sound and strong; not a sign of a wound. Let go my hands, Pasque!"

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"What!" he laughed; "let go the very prisoners I've tried so long to take? Oh, I'm so happy to see you! Of all the people in the world you're the one I've been wishing to see. Pardon me for speaking hurriedly; but it's come and go with me. I've got to be off frightfully soon. But one thing I must say. While you slept, just now, I saw a blue vein swelling on your neck and I put my lips there. I'm a thief, Po Groudy. Will you forgive me?"

"Mr. Le Butt!" said she, reproachfully. She fingered her neck and brushed at it as if to rid herself of some such monster as a caterpillar. The next moment she lifted her eyes to his. He saw a rebukeful flash of spirit in them and quailed a little.

"Do you know," said she, "I'm as unclean as a leper. So long as you men butcher I shall be bloody. I wish you would not talk to me of love, Pasque. Indeed, it is no time for such talk. I have my work, and you have yours. Do you not feel the sorrow I feel about all these things that are happening?"

"I think I understand you," said he, gravely; "but do you forgive me?"

"For what?" said she; for she had grown too serious to think of trifles.

"I'll repeat the sin if you've forgotten it so soon," he cried.

But her look forbade him. Yet she bore steadily the fondling of his eyes, and did not withdraw her hands even after he had unlocked his own.

"It's too bad," he said; "I've got to go this very minute. And how I hate to leave you. With nothing but words on my tongue, I can't tell you what I've thought of you. I might pile word on word for an hour and I couldn't. You've been with me in all our marches. The moment I'm up I think of you; and you're with me when I go to sleep. All the time I devour you with

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my thoughts. You're to be my wife. It must be so. And, therefore, don't suffer risk, I beg you. Unc' Eph says you were bolder last night than men in battle. You'll kill me with heartbreak if you don't be careful of yourself."

"Do not you run risks?"

"I must. It's my duty. I'm soldiering with Jackson. But, there, Unc' Eph's calling. The column's in motion. Promise me!"

"I promise you nothing, my dear Pasque. What are we to the thousands that die?"

"Just a rose," pleaded Pasque.

She plucked him a rose; and off through the orchard he sped towards his hurrying Creoles, who hallooed to him about his julep sweet in the throat.

Pasque was now surcharged with that fire of love which glows within a deep-souled man when fresh from the presence of her whom he adores. For a long time he had no eye or ear for aught about him; his thoughts were centred upon Po. He felt her hand still within his; she hovered over him and was with him and sweetened the world for him. But his happiness was rudely brushed aside. Very fearful was the battle that afternoon—very fearful and exacting and bloody. Once, with his handkerchief to his eyes, he made believe to be wiping away grime. In truth, he was wiping away tears for his dead. He had come to love his men. For hours Po was out of his thoughts.

As for Po, she had readily disenthralled herself of the yoke put about her spirit by Pasque during the few moments of their meeting. It was not with her now as it had been in the car at Baltimore the day his words had stormed their way to her heart. She had thought very lovingly of Pasque many times since then, but always had conquered herself. "Now I know what temptation is," she would murmur; her lips would move;

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the nun-like part of her being would subdue the woman; serenity, peace, and the higher love would possess her.

Refreshed by her sleep, she was on the point of starting in search of General Lee, that she might ask for a pass through his lines, when ambulances with Jackson's wounded began to arrive at the plantation-house. There were surgeons and attendants to look after most of these; but Po helped Eubanks for some hours, and would have remained longer with him had not the battle-roar at sunset told her where her duty lay.

So, after dark, Jule being with her, she set out in her ambulance, which threaded a road lined with thousands of troops and brought her finally into the Ravine of Death.

It was a rare spectacle. Cannon-shot had knocked a long row of seasoned cordwood into splintered heaps, and exploding shells had set the débris ablaze, so that now it was burning like a vast bonfire, with tongues of flame lapping up among the green boughs of the forest. The old poets, musing upon the fate of mortals who had passed down to fiery realms, saw in their imagination such scenes as Po now saw with living eyes. Up and down the ravine she beheld many soldiers stiffened in death; multitudes prostrate but manifestly alive, since some were making shift to prop themselves upon their elbows, while others were turning their faces pitifully towards the ambulances or the scores of surgeons present or such of their comrades as were moving about the field.

The sounds that troubled the air in this ravine were no longer strange to Po's ears; but the shells which from time to time exploded in the fire, and the surpassingly sorrowful whimper and brute appeal of stricken horses on the plateau above, wrought upon her and smote her and well-nigh struck the holy cunning from her hand and tongue. But soon she was helping the surgeons.

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No one was quicker to find a bullet or tie an artery or bind a wound. Thus she passed from one sufferer to another, hour after hour,—for there were more than two thousand dead and ten thousand wounded hereabouts, and Mercy had scope and occasion to use her wings.

Po took up the task of looking the dead in the face, man by man. It was a cruel fire that burned there at the edge of the woods—cruel, in that it crept out and around and reached lappingly for men who could not crawl away; but it was also a blessed fire, because it served as a great lamp for Po and for the surgeons and litter-bearers and ambulance drivers in that part of the field. Sometimes a single glance was enough to tell Po that she could be of no use to the stark one who lay in her path; then again she would have to stoop and bring her face close to the face of the victim; and, if the fire flamed up that moment, there she would be gazing upon the full horror of it—her own countenance eager, piteous; his a thing of awesomeness, eyes glazed and staring, jaw down, mouth agape, just as it was when the last battle-shout had come out of it.

Jule touched her mistress on the shoulder and pointed to a strange sight. It was a long line of Duryea's Zouaves who lay in perfect alignment, front rank and rear rank, just as they had fallen—their bodies still unstripped, their red legs strangely conspicuous in the firelight. Po touched them one by one. All were dead. A few steps away were the bodies of many Mississippians whom the Zouaves had fought. These, too, Po examined man by man. The body of one of them was still warm. He was of monstrous size, and by his bearskin waistcoat Po at once recognized him as a celebrity of whom Eph had spoken. He was of fame as the giant of the Confederate army. Po's fingers found his wound—a tiny hole in his chest, with a corresponding hole in his

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back. Then she worked over the man, with simple restoratives, as best she could.

"How do you feel?" asked Po, as his eyes opened.

"Bad as all git-out," said he. "I allows I'm plum done fer. Who's you-uns?"

Po told him.

The Mississippian sat up and looked around.

"Ther's a passel o' sufferment hyre," he said; "hit's bin a massacree! I don't reckon hit's a corner o' hell, kaze you're too nigh like one o' them thar angel-birds."

"I'm glad you believe in angels," said Po, ever ready to save a soul. She gave way to a weakness and began to sermonize.

"Let up!" growled the Mississippian; "stop, ur I'll cuss. I don't want yer gospel; gimme a dram."

Po was silent. The wounded man watched her motions. He smiled when she found his pipe, filled it, placed the stem between his lips, and lit it for him.

"There!" said she.

"You're a shifty gal," admitted the giant; "sweeter'n wet sweetenin' er dry sweetenin'. This ud be hell fer sartain, if you warn't an angel-bird. You're easin' my mis'ry, gal. You're helpin' me a lot. Spit out yer gospel if you want. How'd ye like ter sing a hymn fer me. Don't keer whether hit's Baptis', ur Meth'dist, ur plain halleluye."

Po sang softly in the Mississippian's ear.

"Louder!" demanded the giant; "I don't aim ter hog the camp-meetin'. I hain't skeered o' hell, gal; but, by jings, yer singin's jes' nacherly purty. Give hit a pitch."

Then he lifted himself on his hands and bellowed forth through the ravine:

"You-dem! Hesh up yer racket! Hyre's an angel-bird as is er-gwine ter sing us su'thin'!"

Po's judgment told her it would be better if she should go away from the giant, and pass along to the place

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where Jule was handing out water; but impulse ruled her, and she lifted up her voice, and sang:

"Oh, swing low, sweet chariot,
Oh, leave me not behind!"

The groans lessened, and many of the wounded turned their faces towards her. The more she sang, the greater grew her wish to sing. No longer was she Po of the Crimea—Po of the soft, white hands, thinking more of the world and less of God; Po of Baltimore, with love breaking in. She was Po of the bethel-boat now; and bodies were not worth saving—she would save souls! Oh, the fires of hell! They should not burn these thousands who lay dying in Boatswain's ravine. Po sang as she had never sung before; and from near and far came limping and crawling hundreds of wounded men who formed a circle round her.

The Mississippian looked upon Po with wide-open eyes. His pipe dropped from his mouth. He fell back. "Sing ag'in, gal," said he, with blood-huskiness. "Who's afear'd o' hell when you're around? Sing us about that thar charry'ut."

Once more Po sang, the giant's head in her lap.

"Don't ye spile yer handkercher a-wipin' that," said he; "glory ter God! Thar now, gal."

He looked around, as if ashamed.

"I done what yer wanted me ter do, didn't I? Dunno if I'm a fool ur no; but I done hit an' hit's fer keeps, gal,—fer keeps!"

In another moment he was dead.

This plucking up of a soul from the mouth of the pit brought upon Po the olden ecstasy; and so singing and praying she drew hardness and despair out of many of those who were listening. War, hate, ambition, and all the pride of gross humanity shrank in their minds and

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passed away and were totally disregarded; for here were they now in the portal of a new life, and the breath they were breathing was an immortal elixir.

It was then that Pasque found Po. When she began to lift up her voice he got upon his feet, listened, wondered. Then he came swiftly to the spot, swept the scene with eager eyes, and stood gazing upon the singer.

But when Po in turn saw him, a change came over her. Pasque as a distressing shadow upon her! Yet such he was at this instant; nor could he fail to see that his coming had broken in upon her enthusiasm. She had been in high air; Pasque had brought her out of her exaltation and down to earth. She had lost her clayey self in hectic imagination of a far realm vividly real to her. Now back to her clay she came, and the wings of her spirit drooped. For, oh, on earth none may escape the tangle of grosser things; and not one of us may be what he would wish to be. Love is a guilty thing—sometimes a guilty, sorrowful thing. Away with vulgar love when souls are breathing out.

Poor Pasque! "Miss Groudy," said he, in grave, low voice, with much sentiment and sorrow in it, "you are helping with the wounded. Let me be your servant. I'll do what you tell me. I'll be as faithful to you as Jule."

So Pasque went with Po all through the hours between midnight and dawn, through the morning of the next day when the dead were buried, and through the hot and reeking afternoon till the battlefield was cleared of its sufferers. Evening found them in an untrampled meadow near Grapevine bridge, and here Po camped for the night. Pasque left her to fetch a guard. But the thought flashed upon him: Why not stand guard himself? He arranged with his general to be summoned when needed and returned to the meadow. Po had given over her ambulance to a wounded man; and she and

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Jule now lay on the ground at its side, sleeping the sleep of exhaustion. Smoke from a protecting smudge fire blew over them. A horse, worried by flies, was stamping the ground dangerously near Po's head. Pasque gently lifted her to move her out of reach of the hoofs. She stirred but did not awake. Pasque still held her in his arms, loth to loose her out of them. Her slumber was profound, and he did not wonder that it should be so after her three days and nights of labor. Honeysuckle and wild roses and magnolia blooms already were sweetening the night air, magically lit by a thousand fireflies. There was enchantment here for Pasque. He seated himself under cover of a wild rose-clump—her head upon his shoulder, her cheek against his. Her pulsations and the heave of her bosom and the breath she breathed upon him brought to him an ecstasy that was an intoxication. He felt their two hearts beating, one against the other—hers tranquilly, his in turbulence. He enwrapped her in his arms and wished he might hold her thus through eternity.

Jule grew unquiet and sat up. Pasque's heart stopped beating. But Jule felt about until she had touched her mistress, and then sank back as though she had partaken of the chloroform she had helped administer.

Pasque fed the fire with twigs and lowered Po's head upon his arm that the light might play upon her face. Pity came over him because of the hollowness under her eyes and the thin crescents of dark blue upon her lids. How much it must cost one of her sensibility to go through these horrors she had elected to face! That tenderness which leads to tears smote Pasque in the breast, and with his disengaged hand he fondled her hair, and in his passion he kissed her softly again and again. A thousand caresses, indeed, he bestowed upon her; and that these sweets were stolen made them no less dear to him. Long hours sat Pasque in his ravishment. He grew

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watchful of the passing moments, and those that were gone he sighed to call back. Grudging time its privilege, he glanced at the stars as in majestic, slow procession they moved across the sky. Their beauty stirred him, and, because of the joy in his blood, thrilled him. They ennobled his love, and he was all happiness, and felt that it was well he had been born if only for what had come to him this never-to-be-forgotten night.



Chapter XXIV

“ JACK BOWLING, O ”

BUT there were other battle sufferers than those whom Po had helped. Chance and Will thought less about the crippled men than about the crippled horses. With drooping flanks hundreds of these stood in the thickets, whimpering mournfully—this one hamstrung, that one lacking a leg, another doomed to slow death from some hidden wound. General Stuart advised the boys to herd the mangled creatures and be sternly merciful. “ Don’t shoot them,” he said, reflecting that even a slight fusillade in an army’s rear is panic-breeding. “ Take the big farrier along with you, and let him use his sledge.”

They took Eph also. They knew where to find him, because Pasque had told them, and they wanted him to help them pick out such of the beasts as might be saved.

“ Stub-boy! Stub-boy!” called out Eph, on his beautiful mare, leading the carrion cavalcade which came hobbling, limping, stumping along, noisy with water-whimpers and so nearly human in the reproach of their eyes that Chance and Will and the burly farrier who followed on foot felt as though they were doing something too wicked ever to be wiped out of their memories, even by the sponge of time. They reached an old field in the pines. Eph hitched his mare and went among the horses.

“ Dey hain’t none er ’um fitten ter lib nohow,” was his verdict. “ Wough!” he bellowed, as the farrier began to whirl his hammer. “ Looky-yan!”

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A black boy in army dress was making off with his mare.

He flung himself upon a saddle-sore horse he had just doomed to death, and raised a hue and cry. Headlong and persistent was his chase, but, instead of recapturing his mare, he thundered in among the Union pickets. The bluecoats laughed at his cavalry charge, but refused to release him. If he knew Captain Sproule, so much the better. They sent Eph to Savage's Station, now the centre of the grand whirl of blue.

Great was Eph's joy when he found Johnsey, who was boarding a locomotive to run down to White House Landing with orders from head-quarters. McClellan was about to cut his base on the Pamunkey and swing his whole army from the Chickahominy to the James. Tremendous work was to be done. A hundred thousand men were in retreat; a hundred thousand in pursuit.

"Get aboard, Unc' Eph," said Johnsey; "as soon as this flurry's over I'll have you sent home."

Eph never ceased to wonder at what he now saw. Huge heaps of pork, coffee, sugar; boxes that would have filled the holds of a great fleet of transports—all these and ten thousand things besides fell to the torch at the spot where General Washington had claimed his bride. In these Custis meadows when McClellan had arrived were a thousand acres of beautiful green wheat. Now there was not a vestige of it, nor of the multitude of white tents which for weeks had dotted the two-mile plain. Eph saw the fire play around the edges of the heaps, eat in, devour. The valley of the Pamunkey was filled with explosions, leaping flames, great smoke clouds.

At the Chickahominy crossing Johnsey backed train after train into the river. These were filled with ammunition and were on fire. Like monsters gone mad they took the plunge from the high trestle, splitting the air with the concussion of innumerable shells. With the

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ness fear came over Eph and a sort of awe—for this devil's play. He was glad when the din ceased. patter of rain sounded sweet to him and the noise of swamp frogs was music.

it when they reached Savage's next morning there more din. It was Sunday now—hot and sultry. army stores at the station were on fire. Exploding shells caused the wounded roundabout to feel as if a battle were going on.

"Junc' Eph," reported Johnsey, "an attack is expected. I want you to go join Dr. Bowling. He's at White Oak Camp bridge with Cousin Po's teams."

Eph found the Sanitary wagons under a spreading oak a few yards from the causeway. "We're waiting our turn to cross," said Dr. Bowling, welcoming him. It was an all-day wait. After hundreds of siege guns had been fired by, a train of canvas-covered wagons began to move. There were six thousand of them. So many mules had never before been seen; so much profanity Parson Bowling had never before heard. It amused Tommy to watch these two—Eph's strong old face, dark-lighted; his thick, firm underlip moving at times as if he were about to exclaim; his lively eyes measuring what they saw; his brows studiously drawn, and his grayed head thrown back like that of a Hannibal reviewing his legions. But the alternating looks of benignity and sorrow that passed over Parson Bowling's countenance were still more interesting—sorrow at the oaths and lashings, benignity when these gave place to salutations and merry chaff. For wit came from the six hundred teamsters as well as ribaldry, and the fusillade by the hour. The bellowing cattle, which next came on, covered the watchers with dust, and, before a cloud had settled, infantry filed upon the causeway. Then it was that Eph and the chaplain faced true fire. The men in the ranks joked Eph about his hulking size,

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his cottony hair, and his grandsire mien. All the piquancies ever uttered about Ham and the sons of Ham were revamped and flung upon Eph good-humoredly, the woods ringing. And directly some one among these tens of thousands of soldiers streaming by, corps after corps, recognized Parson Bowling and raised the shout, intoning it as upon a bugle:

"Have you seen—have you seen—have you seen Jack Bowling, O?"

Then everybody took it up, and sang it and whistled it and tooted it and roared it. On towards the head of the column reaching for Malvern Hill it passed, and when those who were entering the swamp from Chickahominy side heard it they too began to bellow:

"Have you seen—have you seen—have you seen Jack Bowling, O?"

"Who was the Juniper Water Man?" asked Dr. Bowling, suddenly, turning to Eph. "Miss Groudy says you know all about the Nat Turner rising, and I find myself interested in the Juniper Water Man."

Eph gave his experience; but was interrupted, for sure enough battle broke out at Savage's. Rumors flew thick. It was said that a whole regiment of the rear guard had been shot down in a heap, stemming the tide. But the most painful rumor related to the wounded. They were to be abandoned.

Dr. Bowling was deeply concerned. Having sent Eph on with the wagons, he returned to Savage's. There he found three thousand victims of the various battles. Though it was past midnight, the weary surgeons were still at work. The smell of chloroform was in the air. Maimed men were lying in regular rows near each operating-table—one row for those whose wounds had just been treated, another for those who were awaiting their turn. This last was the turbulent and groaning row. The men with the deadly wounds were the quietest. A

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shot through the hand or through the heel seemed to be a warrant for noise-making. Amputations were performed quickly. It was a lift to the table, an inspiration of chloroform, a cut right, a cut left, a rasp, a knotting of suture, a closing of skin-flaps, a release from the tourniquet, and the torture was over.

Dr. Bowling resolved to go into captivity with the wounded, who at daybreak drew up in close ranks outside the tents. Creeping across the fields were the Confederate skirmishers.

“Cheer up, my friends,” he said; “don’t be cast down. Though the enemy be as thirsty as the dogs of the battlefield that licked up the blood of Ahab, God will be with us!”

Among those in the host that had sung the song of “Jack Bowling” was Farrabee—bitter, anxious, free-spoken Farrabee. Yes, it was always retreat. Farrabee cut with his tongue among the battery men of the Pennsylvania Reserves. He flayed McClellan, and even railed at Po Groudy. He had heard that she was ministering to the Secesh wounded. Why wasn’t she working with the Union wounded?

Were not lads in blue blouses dying on every road? He had seen ever so many of them—in the briers, among the rank “jimson” weeds, along the shady side of old worm fences. He could not drive out of his mind a bit of a picture painted there that very morning. First, a rose-bush had attracted him—a most beautiful bush filled with crimson roses. Then, looking more closely as he rode past, he had seen that those roses were showering their petals down on the face of the handsomest youth he had ever beheld. Oh, such a noble face! Farrabee’s big eyeballs had rolled excitedly. Yes, the chap was dead—the swarming flies gave evidence of that. Only putrescence where nobility had been. Yesterday a sweet soul; now a stench. There he was under the rose-bush,

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with his beautiful hair and glassy eyes; and no one in the North—not his mother, not his sisters, if mother or sisters he had—would ever know how he had died, or where, or the least thing about him.

That evening battle-sounds were mingled with mutterings of thunder. Aware that Lee's divisions were closing in, Farrabee was troubled. The Union rear-guard might focus its guns on the swamp thoroughfare and hold back Jackson, who was coming down from the north; but what was to protect the right flank between the swamp and Malvern—an open region, pierced from the west by three highways leading to Charles City Cross-Roads?

This unguarded Charles City hub, with its many spokes, was the vital spot, and towards it fifty gray regiments were stealing. Fireflies played a jack-o'-lantern trick on the Reserves, pressing down to seize Malvern heights. They mistook the New Market for the Malvern Road. Presently they brushed against the enemy, countermarched, and formed with their backs to the hub.

No sooner was his battery in place than Farrabee crawled under a gun. Flies bit him, toads hopped over him, little lead-colored worms measured him. Day broke. The sun scorched him, but still he slept. His captain had to kick him in the ribs to wake him.

"Get up!" shouted the captain. "Don't you want to see the fun?"

"What time is it?"

"Three o'clock. We've been squatting here all morning. There are forty thousand Johnnies in that ravine over there. Everybody agrees you've snored them off for ten hours, and almost saved the Army of the Potomac; but, by God, here they come! Look alive, man!"

Farrabee knew this to be the critical moment of the Seven Days' battles. He faced his guns to the front and for an hour emptied them into the smoke,—always into the smoke; seeing nothing but the flash, but expecting

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to see devil faces come out of the smoke. He must be raking the woods eight hundred yards in front; but who could tell? Under the smoke pall was a thin stratum of clear air. His captain, on all fours, peered under the canopy.

"How does it look?" bawled Farrabee.

"The ravine's lousy with Johnnies!" called out the captain; "they're massing there to charge us. I see the tips of their battle-flags. One, two, three! I count four flags! Five! I see their faces, damn 'em! their bodies, their legs! Double your canister, Farrabee, and let drive straight ahead!"

The enemy came on with a splitting yell. There was no mistaking their whereabouts now. Farrabee saw the devil faces he had been looking for. He felt the stroke of feet upon his body, seized an onward-rushing man, tripped him, and rolled over and over to escape a bayonet thrust.

"We're up Salt River," thought Farrabee. But that instant the enemy, hurrying back, ran over him again and fled towards the ravine. Bluecoats came swarming up. His own gunners rallied. Then, being by this time a good artilleryman, he cried out to the rescuers:

"Keep in the rear of the guns!"

But the blue masses were already surging towards the woods, at the edge of which they met fresh troops in overpowering numbers, who beat them off and once more came double-quicking on.

In the few moments thus consumed much happened.

Dusk was falling. Kearny was advancing to the support of the Reserves. But for this overzeal of the supporting infantry the guns and the army were safe. The old captain was terribly distressed.

"For God's sake, Farrabee!" he cried; "go out among the boys and beg them to clear our front!"

Farrabee ran among the stubborn infantrymen, and

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bellowed as only he and the bull of Bashan could bellow till they had unmasked the pieces.

Then, seeing enormous masses of the enemy within a copper's toss of him, he faced his battery, looked into the mouths of his twenty-pounder Parrotts, triple charged with canister, lifted his hands above his head and commanded: "Fire!"

The cannoneers heard. They knew his voice. They knew his situation. But they obeyed. The sound was like the tearing out of the side of the hill. Farrabee was blown back among the advancing enemy, his own body hurling down a swath of men. His left leg was cut away as with a knife.

Darkness came. Longstreet had the guns, but not the key to the Malvern Road. Very bloody was the field; yet it soon grew to be a quiet field, in spite of the groans and the crackling of little powder fires, licking their way among the shattered twigs and the splintered fences. As late as midnight men were talking here and there upon the field and in the New Market Road.

"Look at this one," said a Confederate surgeon to a litter-bearer; "leg shot off near the thigh and the stump scorched in a powder fire. If it hadn't been for the searing he'd have bled to death hours ago. That's what I call luck. Take him to the churchyard grove."

High was the sun this same morning when Po, Pasque, and Eubanks, coming up together in Jackson's column, saw the wounded under the churchyard oaks. Pasque had been as faithful to Po as her own shadow. Every morning, with dew on the alders and catbirds scolding from the roadside briers, he had ridden by her ambulance. Every evening, when the cannonading died down, he had stolen to her side. There were times when he earned her thanks, when he caught her smile, when he thrilled as only lovers thrill by reason of some chance look into the far depths of her eyes. For three whole

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days Pasque had been the happiest man among the two hundred thousand marching men between the Chickahominy and the James. Now, of a sudden, he became the most miserable. For Po, scanning the wounded to make sure all had been given attention, spied Farrabee, who lay by the road, looking exceedingly worn and pale, but with his big brown eyes more lustrous and haunting than ever. Po cried out: "Pasque, that is Mr. Farrabee; a dear friend of mine,—a very dear friend." She sprang from the ambulance and ran to Farrabee's side, and, oblivious of all else, gave herself over to his case.

Fresh battle threatened on ahead, and Pasque hurried from the churchyard to deploy his troops. "A dear friend of mine,—a very dear friend." The words were hard to forget. They echoed constantly in Pasque's mind. Farrabee must be more than a friend, or she would not have been so affected, nay, agitated, at sight of him. Had she not actually embraced the man? He recalled what she had said in praise of Farrabee's fearlessness and high manhood. The fellow was terribly mangled, but would she not nurse him back to life? And in doing so would not her long-continued pity for him and anxieties about him increase her love for him? It would be just like her to devote herself to somebody frightfully maimed. Jealousy tormented Pasque. All the sweet love thrills he had felt when he held Po in his arms at Grapevine bridge now turned into pangs. Blood mounted into his head and numbed the part of his brain where reason lodged. His temples throbbed. Sullen anger was in his face. He inflamed his mind by flashing into it imaginary scenes of tenderness between Po and this bluecoat lover of hers. "A dear friend of mine,—a very dear friend." Then in the conflict of his thoughts came the tempering reflection that it was foolish to nurse such suspicions against Po. No one in the world was truer-hearted. Yet the next instant Pasque

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Lord Jesus. For among the fallen were diverse kinds of men, the coarse-natured and the fine, the weeds and the flower of the South—husbands, fathers, sons; and many a noble colonial line was cut and good blood, untransmitted, passed from the earth forever.

Lanterns in the hands of men bearing away wounded flitted over the field all night. Litter-bearers from either side commingled. Po and Eubanks labored together. Near midnight Eph joined them, stealing down from Crew house unchallenged. After daylight Pasque came on the field. He found Dr. Eubanks and Eph, but missed Po.

"There she goes," said Eubanks, pointing to an ambulance on Malvern crest. "General Jackson gave her a pass last night. He paroled Farrabee, and she has him with her." Then, seeing Pasque's pained look, he added: "She left a letter for you, I think. Where is it, Eph?"

Where was it? Neither had it. In the hurry of her departure, Po must have forgotten to leave the letter. Pasque's expression changed with extraordinary rapidity in keeping with his thoughts. What had Po written? Had she confessed her love for Farrabee? Had she said farewell forever? Had she given him hope? Now, as later, the undelivered message was the starting-point for a thousand thoughts. In course of time he would write it in his imagination in every possible form—kind, cruel; endearing, cold; a thing that gave him lease of life, a sentence of death. Into it and out of it he alternately read bliss and despair.

Eubanks exchanged glances with Eph, then placed a caressing hand on Pasque's shoulder. An odd emotion stirred the old Virginian. His thoughts suddenly went back to Nat Turner's time,—to the little boy in the school-house chimney; to the little girl who had hidden with Eph in the forest. He bugled into his bandanna, then waved with it "farewell."



PART V
EBB-TIDE





Chapter XXV

"SPECIAL ORDERS NO. 191"

WAS it a lover or a soul Po was trying to save? If Farrabee should die, whither would he go? Into the pit! So she prayed that the clog in his severed femoral might hold his blood in long enough for her to convert him. He for his part liked to follow the workings of her mind. Often, when she soared on free wing high and fair among the spiritual subtleties, his big eyes would grow bigger gazing upon her, and he would take up her thought and bear it on; but no sooner did she cloud her logic than he would turn his face away. He was still unconverted when she and Jule and Tommy Beeswax went on board a steamboat, laden with sick and wounded, bound from Harrison's Landing for Washington. Thence they were to proceed to the Bee Farm. Rather than swelter below decks, they contrived to bestow themselves in the boat's bow.

Going up the bay that night, a distinguished party took seats well forward. President Lincoln, who was returning from a visit to the army, hung his hat on an anchor-fluke near Po, sank with his shoulders and the small of his back into a chair, and reached successfully with his long legs for the steamer's rail. It was a beautiful evening—stars shimmering in the blue, heat-lightning playing over the dark Virginia shore, and a soft breeze, set astir by the steamer's motion, humming lullabies in the ear. In the glow of a match struck by a smoker stooping out of the wind Mr. Lincoln had a glimpse of Po attending Farrabee, who was asleep on a cot. What he saw piqued his curiosity. He reflected for a moment, then touched

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her on the shoulder, and whispered, "I see you wear the Sanitary badge. What are you doing? Holding an artery? Is it possible?"

"Yes, sir," she replied; "leastways, I'm pressing the tissue to aid the clog. The wound suppurated well, and we began to think it would heal; but it bled afresh to-day, and the surgeons operated slightly."

He took his feet from the rail, moved his chair, stooped nearer, and said, with a sort of awe in his whisper:

"How long have you held it?"

"Six hours."

"I remember an old copybook line: 'Patience is a Virtue.' I wish I could help you."

Other questions followed. They were soon on Bull Run field, in the Ravine of Death, on Malvern slopes. At each interruption from his party he rested a forefinger on her arm to hold her attention. Though they spoke in undertones, their talk aroused Farrabee. At something that was said a dissenting noise, like a smothered "Humph!" sounded from his throat.

"What's the matter, my friend?" asked Mr. Lincoln. "Do I disturb you?"

"Not at all," said Farrabee. "It's the way the war's being run that disturbs me. You big guns up there at Washington are making a terrible botch of it."

"Suppurative fever, sir!" whispered Po, apologetically. "Oh, excuse him, please! They say he did as much as any in the terrible rear-guard fight."

"Never mind, my girl," said Mr. Lincoln; "let him ease his mind. Go on, my friend."

"As you see," said Farrabee, "I'm done up, and might as well use what's left of my breath in a good cause. I want to get in one more lick for the Union before I die." Thereupon he drew a scathing and scornful indictment of those responsible for the conduct of the war, and especially of the thousands of contractors who were

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enriching themselves at the expense of the nation in its hour of peril.

"Go on," repeated Mr. Lincoln, unresentfully, at each pause.

Finally, Farrabee made a plea for emancipation.

"Have you got in your last lick?" asked the President.

"Yes, sir,—thanks to your forbearance."

"Well, now, as to emancipation, we must go slow on that. We can't afford to slap our Kentucky and Tennessee friends in the face."

"That's so. God Almighty's on our side, but we must also have Kentucky and Tennessee."

"In regard to running the war, if you were not so used up I'd tell you a story about a boy who lived out our way."

"I'd like to hear it," said Farrabee.

"His mother sent him to gather in eggs. He hurried at first, because a thunder-storm was rising fast; but when he got his pockets full and his hat heaped up, he couldn't hurry for fear of breaking the eggs. Occasionally one of them dropped in spite of him. When he got close to the house, the heavens split. He calculated that by a dash and by flanking the danger end of a particularly mean mule in his path he could reach shelter. 'Mom,' he said, 'I don't know if it was the thunder or the durned mule, but every single egg's cracked.'"

"And which am I," spoke up Farrabee, "the thunder-bolt or the mule?"

"Take your choice," said Mr. Lincoln. "I'll admit I'm dropping eggs as I go, but I'm not doing it on purpose. Hold tight to his artery, my Sanitary friend. Pull him through. We'll have him in the Cabinet yet."

Transferring his hat from the anchor-fluke to his head, Mr. Lincoln shook hands with Farrabee, patted Po affectionately on the shoulder, and said, "Good-night."

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In Washington, next day, he remarked to Mr. Coutts: "My state-room was stuffy and I suffered from nightmare. A godlike being came to me and put up a sorry face and declared he was bleeding to death and insisted that I should hold an artery for him. He said he was the Union. So I took the skin of the thing in my clumsy old fingers and held on. It was mighty slippery work, I remember. But I gripped it as tight as I could. I guess I held that artery all night, for when somebody knocked at my state-room door in the morning and called out 'Washington!' I was squeezing my nose so hard I could barely breathe."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Coutts.

But not often during that month or the next did Mr. Coutts find it in his heart to laugh. On his great tally map, now dotted with battle-marks, he was no longer busy with the Richmond region, but with the front of Washington. July was bad enough, but August was worse. Cedar Mountain was fought. Next the Second Bull Run—a terrible battle. Then came the panic days. Washington was overrun with stampeded troops. Mr. Coutts ah-me'd and oh-my'd by the hour.

"It's tough," he muttered. "If I were not a bred-in-the-bone George Washington patriot I'd lose heart. Army politics is rampant, feuds are starting, soldiers are swarming round the dépôts going home on furlough; McClellan's under a cloud, and Pope, the new general—well, Pope ain't worth his salt. For why? Once I saw a man who had locomotor ataxia. He couldn't boss his own arms and legs,—think of that! No more can Pope boss the various corps under him. That's why he's left the carcasses of so many brave fellows cumbering the earth between here and the Rappahannock. The fault's not with the soldiers. Whose fault is it? No wonder the people are getting sick of the way the war's managed. The spirit of terror breathes over all. As I say, it's

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tough—t-o-u-g-h, Ki Coutts. Boomers behind and breakers ahead."

Mr. Coutts was right. Never before since the Union was a union had its fortunes sunk so low. The nation was in gloom; especially was Washington in gloom.

Not so Richmond. There, as in other Secession cities, bells rang out in jubilation. In time they would be melted for cannon metal, but now their ding-dong was very merry, even in the ears of the women in black down in the street and of the soldiers who crowded the fifty hospitals. Few longer doubted the speedy end of the war and the total discomfiture of the Northern Confederacy.

Pasque, just from Manassas to meet a squad of Homochitto recruits, was more than ever a Secessionist. A year before he had secretly doubted whether the seceding States could hang together long; for why shouldn't there be break-up after break-up on the occasion of every quarrel? But now they had gone in company to a bloody school and were solidified. Little comfort had Pasque out of this thought, however; or any other, for that matter. He was still trying to imagine what Po had written in the letter she had failed to leave behind at Malvern Hill. Jealousy of Farrabee tormented him. Had he opened his heart to Rhetta she would have argued half his fears away; but he was not confiding. As it was, she rallied him upon his dejection. Though she knew nothing of the Farrabee incident, she knew of his infatuation for Po; and, having seen Po, she could understand why and how such a man as Pasque could love the girl. She remarked that his voice had improved. He now spoke in a sonorous bass, made musical as if by the process of talking to beautiful women on some rose-embowered veranda with the moon up and whippoorwills calling; but sentimental Rhetta understood that Love had done this for Pasque. "Jeb" Stuart, jolly and given to song; Pelham, his yoke-fellow, fair, smooth-faced,

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curly-haired; Von Borcke, the Prussian dragoon, so big in bulk he broke down horses,—these, and a hundred others Rhetta named over in her thoughts, would steal away from camp and ride by night twenty miles to a dance; but not Pasque—oh, no! She knew he had slept faithfully among the frogs and the snakes and his Homochittos, with the smell of the earth in his nostrils, and Po in his heart. His trouble was a soul trouble.

"Poor old goose!" she said to Eph; "there he sits, thinking his thousand thoughts about her, and all of them sad."

Eph was preparing to leave Richmond. "Marse John" was to float a hospital flag over Oaks of Saul. During the sickly season in the Tidewater country, argued Dr. Eubanks, there ought to be a place in the mountains for convalescing men, to whom swamp air was poison. Rhetta and Mother Belle were to join him at the Oaks; but, first, Rhetta was to go to the army on a mission of supreme importance.

At Verdiersville Union troopers had made a night dash to capture Stuart while he slept; and he had lost his hat and his haversack, but not quite his life. Therefore, it was agreed in Franklin Street and on Church Hill and the various other Richmond hills where roses climbed, that Rhetta should take him another hat—a Prince Rupert, with a beautiful ostrich-plume lately arrived by blockade-runner, with the compliments of "the ladies of England." As Mr. Davis handed Rhetta a pass to the front, he said that he hoped the token was a forerunner of British recognition. Eph tried to dissuade Rhetta from going to the army.

"See hyar, honey," said he, "yo' keep er way from dat mess er men. Dey hain't fitten fer yo' ter go 'mung nohow. Dey're co'ser den hosses. Cyarn yo' let Marse Pasque tek de slouch up, en gib hit ter de ginerel?"

But Pasque, who was to have escorted Rhetta, was

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detained by his recruits; so with her favorite Trix in a box-car under care of Peter John, she journeyed by rail as far campward as possible, when, lo! at the last station stood an escort of cavalry sent by Stuart to meet her at the first intimation of her coming.

Von Borcke was in command of the troop. He had played "Tyrant" to Rhetta's "Virginia" in a "Sic Semper" tableau a few weeks before, quivering a chivalric quiver at the touch of her silk-tipped toe upon his neck; and now, hat off, his hand on the hilt of his huge sword with its two-edged Damascus blade,—famed as a terrible thing that has actually beheaded mortals,—he beamed a welcome. But Rhetta felt happiest when Chance and Will greeted her. With them she would go anywhere.

"Yes, it's a fact," said Chance; "General Lee has moved up into Maryland. The cavalry is between him and Washington. But we'll look after you, Cousin Rhetta. Don't you be afeared. Only it's a long ride—as far as Frederick, I reckon."

"Ah, mees!" cried Von Borcke, as they set off at a gallop. "Seek Semper! seek Semper!"

Then the dragoon began to tell Rhetta what General Lee had said to him in praise of her father, Captain Jack of the old army, which caused a sense of happiness to come over her—a joy lessened by but one thought,—to wit, that she had not been born to shoot and ride astride and grow a soldier's beard.

Thus smartly, march by march, Rhetta and her escort pressed on to overtake Lee's army. When tired of the saddle she rode in an ambulance. Like good fox-hunters familiar with the Culpeper and Manassas regions, her guides led her off the beaten track, with its cut-up roads and choking dust, into by-ways as yet untrodden by masses of men. Past fields of standing corn cantered the troop and along lanes bordered by love-vines and tall asters and taller golden-rod. Far away blue moun-

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tains showed; but they were not so blue as the ragged robin in the fields; and sometimes there was a flame of fireweed in the hollows. Rhetta seemed to herself to be careering as lightly up country as the summer canaries which passed overhead in undulating flight, kee-zeeing a sweet note at each dip and rise of their barely visible bodies. She felt that she had got to the heart of romance,—mellow voices sounded round her, paying court; spring water was sweeter than wine; not once had Trix lathered; and, best of all, the "Prince Rupert" was dust-proof in its bandbox in the ambulance. War, said Rhetta to Von Borcke, was the very grandest, most poetic business man could be engaged in.

Beyond Manassas Von Borcke played strategist. He suggested a *détour*. His idea was to flank the Bull Run battlegrounds. His grimace when Rhetta said she wished to go straight across them made Chance and Will laugh.

"See here, now, Cousin Rhetta," interposed Will, "you don't want to hold your nose for three miles, do you?"

But Rhetta insisted. By the roadside were skulls in which mice were nesting. A heap of bleaching bones was half hidden under Virginia creeper. The stricken trees and fire-blackened houses were not distressing at all,—for nature had been at work turning wounds to scars. But that was on the old field. Riding upon the new (Second Manassas had been fought a week before), Rhetta began to wish she had been less bold. Unburied bodies, horse carcasses in heaps, broken wagons, fragments of caissons lay about upon the plain. Human prowlers in search of lead and leather made off at sight of the troop. Dogs scampered away and stood, wolf-like, regarding the interlopers. Out from before the cavalry, also, gat them scavenger birds—uncanny in looks and motion, gorged past the power to fly. Over all the vast plain was the desolation of death and in the air was

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ution,—which was fine, indeed, for the flower-loving Rhetta who had glowed just now about the glory of

Von Borcke engaged Rhetta in animated talk as to way the armies had clashed in their terrific struggle. The party was approaching a place where bodies lay so thick they seemed to pave the earth, and his wish was to lead her thoughts away from them,—for by this time Rhetta was gasping as she fought with herself, and her fingers were weaving knots in her mare's mane. Her smile, which in times of pleasure came not from one part of her face but from the whole of it, now puckered her lips lacking blood; but, heigh-ho! wasn't she Jack Chinel's daughter? She tried to follow Von Borcke. It was as if what he said was as if spoken from the far end of the echo gallery. She could not shut her eyes to the blood-strewn earth, pitted and seamed and torn. Not a man but was stripped. Here, where a caisson had expended, was a cavernous pit filled with the bodies of men. To the right and left were more men, stark and white and pitiful; and sometimes their arms were outstretched; and sometimes she thought they must be following her with their eyes. Nausea seized her—horror! Nothing buzzed in her ears. Surely she was a being other than herself.

"Catch her, Buddie!" cried Will; "she's keeled. Take her in your arms. Have you got her? That's good. Now hold her head up. I'll lead the mare. Water, for her. Push for water."

"Vorwärts!" cried Von Borcke; and the squadron moved from the field of corpses, trailing dust in its track. When Rhetta came out of her swoon she was on fresh ground by a stream. Vines and the verdure of forest trees met her out the sun. Around her were ferns and flowers. Her head was not pillowed upon velvet, but upon moss as soft as velvet. For all she could tell by eyes or nose

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she was as good as a thousand miles away from anything displeasing to the senses.

"Ah, mees, forgive me," pleaded Von Borcke.

"Don't ah-mees me, major," sighed Rhetta; "*do*, please, get up off your knees. It was my fault. But don't you tell what we've been through,—not a whisper. And ask your men never to breathe a word about it. I'm Jack Archinel's daughter, you see."

Naturally, Rhetta was graver than usual for the rest of the day. As the party approached the Potomac she tried to shame some of the stragglers into rejoining their commands. They had been afield so long that they had marched the shoes off their feet and the oil out of their joints. With roasting-ears as rations, thousands of them were passing South.

That night Rhetta's body-guard camped on a bluff of the Potomac. Bonfires lit the approaches to the river. A column was fording it. Everybody was singing "Maryland, my Maryland." Soon there was a great stir, and Rhetta clapped her hands,—for General Jackson had come up, and was riding Little Sorrel at a run along his column of yelling men. In the Army of Northern Virginia hats were always lifted at sight of Lee; throats opened when Jackson dashed along. These many happenings, and like events on the Maryland shore next morning, drove Rhetta's battlefield memory back into a far chamber of her mind. Some time it would reappear to her, but not now. Maryland delighted her. The iron-weed by the roadside was of the purple that pleased her most; the opening vistas of valley lands were a joy to her, and the rough and ragged infantrymen, pushing onward up-hill and down, so stirred her enthusiasm that she began to sing:

"I want to be a soldier
In the army of the South."

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There was a stir at the side of the road just ahead.

"Oh, you do, do you?" laughed General Stuart, as he rode bareheaded out of the bushes, saluted, gave "Good-morning," patted Trix on the rump, and fell in side by side with his guest.

"You want to be a soldier, eh?" he cried. "That's what I heard you say, Miss Archinel. It suits us, doesn't it, Von? Ha, ha! Von, old boy, what's the matter with *you*? Don't forget I claim you for the cavalry, Miss Archinel. Mind that."

The next instant he began to sing:

"If you want to have a good time——"

But there was interruption. The cavalry split the air with a yell.

Stuart looked rebukefully back, shook his gauntlet, smiled. He was a fine figure, Rhett thought, as he thus turned in his saddle,—gray cadet jacket, light blue breeches, orange sash. His horse and he were as one. His flowing beard was of a rich red with copperish glint, and his moustaches, each the length of his long, straight nose, roped out from a face now full of laughter, now of thought, now of dare-devil determination. Again he sang in rollicking style:

"If you want to have a good time,
Jine the cav-al-ree!"

"Jine the cav-al-ree!" chorused Rhett and the troopers. And so the party passed gaily on to Urbana. Near Urbana was Frederick and the Monocacy; and along the Monocacy lay Lee's infantry. The Union army was said to be coming up from Washington to give battle,—but what of that? Before many days Washington would fall; Baltimore would fall; Maryland would join the Confederacy; the end would come. Stragglers aside,

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the spirit of the invaders was high, so contemptuous were they of Union generalship.

In the evening the cavalry corps gave a ball, at which Rhetta was the guest. A disused academy was the scene. Flags and flowers and laurel branches were hung in trophies and festoons. A thousand sabres glittered in the light of tallow dips, and on the verandas were bands playing Southern airs. The "Prince Rupert" was no small matter in the esteem of Southern chivalry. From Frederick and the whole region roundabout came such belles as were willing to pin outwardly upon their bosoms the Secession flags and badges they had worn concealed in their bodices for more than a year. Many had sworn lovers in the cavalry, others would meet proxies,—for already Jackson had slipped away from the Monocacy, marching west.

At the first scrape of the fiddle, Stuart led Rhetta upon the floor. The polka danced, there followed a quadrille. Candle flames flickered and flared. Peter John, enjoying a smoke on the steps of a side-porch, felt the house shake under the tread of innumerable feet.

"I'll thank you for a light," spoke up some one; who took no fire, however, but was immediately at Peter John's ear with:

"Wist! Don't speak above a whisper."

"You'd better slide off," said Peter John.

It was too dark to distinguish forms or faces, but he recognized Johnsey Sproule.

"I know I am here at risk of a rope," said Johnsey; "but somebody had to put his neck in. Did you get your ten thousand dollars? Don't you want another slice just that size? Or twice as big? Well, listen. We shall sweep this country quicker than they think. They'll get out of Frederick in a hurry. You can depend on that. So post yourself. Play sick. Stay behind. McClellan is in command again. He'll reward you."

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"And you? You'll be with him?"

"No; I'm going through to Harper's Ferry."

"I see," said Peter John. "You've got twelve thousand men up there. They're in a hole. You'll lose them. Jackson's after them now."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, I'm a good guesser—always was. They'll be scooped in. What I can't guess is how you knew I was here."

"I saw your party pass Sugar Loaf Mountain," said Johnsey. "I was there trying to signal to Harper's Ferry. The enemy got most of our signalmen, but I, for one, hid in the timber. I didn't get my message through, so I'm bound to go in person. But, see here," he broke off; "I'm on the point of doing a most idiotic thing. At hazard of my life I'm going to look in on Miss Archinel."

"Take care," said Peter John; "your Buddies will see you."

"They wouldn't betray me for ten million spot cash," said Johnsey. "Why, they'd lend me their horses and uniforms to get off. I'm disguised as one of them now. Stand by the window, Peter John. I'll be your shadow. Fan yourself with your hat, lazily, lazily. That's the ticket. I want to take just one peep at Miss Archinel."

But Johnsey took more than one look. He was immune from discovery, since all beholders were spellbound. The dancing had ceased, and Rhetta, who stood in the centre of the assembly-room, was presenting the "Prince Rupert" to Stuart. Ranged around the two were the dancers, silent, watchful, eager-faced. Stuart bent to the floor. Rhetta crowned him. Then the rafters rang, and the bands on the verandas drowned the cheers with a thunderous "Dixie."

But this was not all. The dancers took order for a

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new scene in the merry proceedings of the night. A Union flag that had been torn from a staff in Frederick was unrolled by four colonels of cavalry, each of whom seized a corner and held it outspread in the middle of the hall. Figures were formed, dance-music again sounded, and Rhetta and a Baltimore belle, famed as a Confederate toast, stepped forward and proceeded to tear the flag into strips, stripe by stripe. They did it gracefully—this Johnsey was willing to admit; but, oh, what a sorrowful thing to do! Yes, indeed, Rhetta Archinel; to-night you are at your highest and lowest. If Betsey McRae were alive she would look twice at you, Miss Rhetta—look hard at you, even as Johnsey is now looking; and the ancient Betsey would make you quail. Rhetta could not know that Johnsey's eyes were upon her; but a sense of guilt, of wrong-doing, of daring desecration caused her to glance at the sabres and flags and trophies, and for an instant—just a flash—she saw Johnsey's face back of Peter John's. Peter John was grinning; but Johnsey. Johnsey's face was full of protestation, sorrow, contempt. As upon Manassas field, with its scavengers and stench and unearthliness, Rhetta's head swam; and she would have fallen but for Stuart's supporting arm.

At this juncture came the sound of cannon-firing. Buglers without blew "Boots and Saddles!" There was hurry-skurry in the ballroom; on the lawn, quick mounting; in the road, a rump-bumping scramble—a hard, fierce ride under the stars.

By midnight the young women with flags on their bosoms were binding wounds. It was the hour of grief after the hour of mirth,—for some of those who had danced there now died there. Very handsome were the stark young cavalymen on the dance-floor when daylight crept in. A fiddle-scape then would have been a sacrilege.

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"Don't you want another slice just that size? Or twice as big?"

In Frederick that morning Peter John took his head in his hands and pondered over Johnsey's offer. Twenty thousand for a bit of news a man might stuff into a burnt cartridge! The prize was tempting.

"Ah!" thought Peter John; "it's enough to make me feel as though I could go steal General D. H. Hill's eye-winkers."

D. H. Hill's was the only infantry division at Frederick. But where would this ticklish business lead? reflected Peter John. Why had he dreamt a certain ugly dream? A tree bore greenbacks in place of leaves; and reaching up to help himself, he had seen a blacksnake swing down, hissing. Then the blacksnake had turned into a hangman's rope, with a noose at the end.

"Pshaw!" muttered Peter John; "it's a sign to me to mind my eye. Therefore I'll be cautious. But I'll go in and win. How?"

He tossed up his hat, and caught it as it came down.

"As easy as that," said he.

Peter John began with General Hill's head-quarters servants. Remembering the blacksnake, he offered no bribes, but let them win from him at cards. By the twelfth of September, which was the day the Confederates abandoned Frederick, he had ingratiated himself completely. The guards thought him a member of General Hill's family. Yet he had learned nothing of consequence. Lee was going to Chambersburg, Harrisburg, Philadelphia. Mere rumors, or possibly intentional fabrications, concluded Peter John. "I've gone through pockets in vain," thought he, as he stood disconsolately by General Hill's tent, watching the infantry file west along the National Turnpike. "It's a failure. I reckon it's the blacksnake hoodoo."

"Where's General Hill?" demanded a courier, riding

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up in haste. His horse showed that he had come at high speed many miles.

"Getting his division off," replied Peter John; "he told me to take his messages, if the messengers couldn't wait."

"What miserable luck!" said the courier, disgustedly. "Here I've run this critter the last five miles so's to get a whack at Frederick on my own account before the Yanks drive the cavalry in, and now I reckon I've got to squat right here till the general turns up. Listen at them guns, won't you?"

"I'm mighty sorry," remarked Peter John; "a lady, of course."

"No," growled the courier. "Ladies go smash! It's a life-preserver."

"Try a drop of this," said Peter John.

"Thankee, boy," said the courier. "Fine flask, fine likker. I tell you what. You fasten on this for me, won't you? It's very important. It's an order from General Lee—Special Orders No. 191. See that General Hill gets it. That's a good feller. I wouldn't miss connection on this for a gold mine."

"Don't worry, sir," said Peter John; "I wish you luck in town."

Rhetta with her escort, hunting high and low for Peter John, found him writhing on the trampled grass in General Hill's abandoned camp.

"But we are retreating," pleaded Rhetta. "You *must* come. Cousin Pasque would never forgive me if I should leave you here. If you're too sick to ride horseback, you can go in the ambulance."

"All right," said Peter John; "I'll go in the ambulance if you'll send it for me."

For a few moments Peter John was alone on the field; and before he left it he did a quick trick. He wrapped "Special Orders No. 191" around a handful of cigars,



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and, placing the paper where it would be seen by the first arriving Union troops, weighted it conspicuously down with his silver-mounted whiskey-flask—a notable sacrifice for Peter John.

“Hold on,” said he to himself. “One thing more.” He wrote on the margin of the paper:

“For General McClellan, from P. Le Butt.”

Then he was off.




Chapter XXVI

RHETTA'S WAY

AN hour later McClellan knew Lee's plans. A war drama on a stupendous scale was to be played. Time was an element—the situation thrilling. In a country where Nature had reared breast-works a thousand feet high, Lee was to hold off the Army of the Potomac with one hand while with the other he choked a smaller army into submission.

Clouds of dust arose from the National Turnpike as McClellan followed Lee. In his day Washington had stirred dust along this road. In their turn, tens of thousands of Conestogas and unnumbered stage-coaches had beaten it up. Now wheel followed wheel, grinding into powder the macadam of the turnpike, which, broad as a city street, stretched straightaway west on the levels, dipped to stone bridges arching beautiful streams, and anon rose in interminable inclines to mountain-passes. The ridges and creeks ran south; the debouchere of the valleys was south. Palpable and impalpable was this dust, set astir by wheel and hoof and foot-leather, a plague and a source of grandeur. For it ascended into the higher air, shutting off as day declined all save the red rays of the sun; so that every evening for a full week the rear brigades of the advancing host saw magnificent battle-banners hanging in the western sky.

But to Po, back again at her post, Farrabee's artery having knit, there was something connected with the march more impressive than the spectacular sunsets. The hundred thousand soldiers left their marks upon the country as they swept it. They were without rations.

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Sutlers' wagons were miles in the rear. Hen-roosts, pigpens, potato patches, gardens, spring-houses, orchards were stormed. What could a poor farmer do, standing guard with a stout stick among his peach-trees when charged upon, flanked, overwhelmed by multitudes of "bluebellies" more ravenous than the locusts of Egypt? Hardly a fence was left standing within five miles of the line of march; because about the time the chimney-swifts began to flock above the tree-hidden homesteads each soldier in the host shouldered his rail. Then suddenly at dusk thousands upon thousands of fires sprang up—an act of magic upon a boundless stage.

It was this breaking out of bivouac fires that impressed Po. She caught her breath when she first saw it. The human element was there. Yonder, indeed, was the multitude. So many, and each with anxious kindred—each, like herself, with a heart that beat and a mind that craved and a soul that some time would pass somewhere, and either be free above or captive in eternal gloom.

The scene impressed Tommy Beeswax, too, but not in the same way. This was Tommy's part of Maryland. Long years had he played Undergrounder here, and the coming up of the armies was the climax and sensation of his born days. Each night he entertained Po with a curious old song in Pennsylvania Dutch, called "Babbel Maul," and then, over his pipe, talked with her by the hour, pausing at times to cock an ear heavenward where the southward-speeding bobolinks whistled "Chee-wink, chee-wink!" as they cut the starlit air.

On Sunday, the fourteenth of September, the Sanitary contingent turned out of the road to permit the Second Corps to pass, and went into camp on the crest of Catoc-tin. Beyond was the Blue Ridge. Below was a narrow valley of red barn-tops, red apples, red-cockled turkeys fat from a long summer's foraging in a land of plenty. Golden stubble fields and fields of ripening corn and fields

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fresh ploughed for winter wheat checkered the space between the mountain walls. Midway ran the Catoctin sparkling in the sun. Nearer were the steeples of an embowered town—a green island in a sea of white-topped wagons constantly fed by a stream of them pouring over Catoctin farther to the north. But for the most part the valley was blue with the multitudes of camp-fire magicians for whose souls Po had prayed while Tommy Beeswax hummed “Babbel Maul.”

Tommy knew of a spring near by, and went for water. As he was returning, with a bucket in each hand, a body of horse swept out of the turnpike into the field.

It was McClellan and his staff. Under McClellan was Black Dan Webster. Black Dan spread out his forelegs and stood in a half-squat while his master pointed his glasses towards a smoky spot well up the western wall of the valley. A battle was threatening at Turner's Pass. The sound of cannon-firing there was like the crack of far-away thunder.

There were three gaps in the disputed mountain-ridge, which was a thousand feet high—Turner's, Fox's, and Crampton's. The first two were close together, just beyond the smoke cloud. Crampton's showed faintly five miles to the south. That was really the pass for McClellan to take, for it was the short cut to Harper's Ferry; but the little general was making mistakes. He had sent the Sixth Corps only that way. Something inbred was tripping him. God made him for a good-hearted man, when just now he should have been a driver. A night march to Crampton's and a daybreak battle would have put him at the spot where he could raise the siege and take Lee at disadvantage.

The staff emptied Tommy's buckets, handing a dipperful to their chief, who said, “My good fellow, how did you happen on a spring with such fine water as this?”

“Oh, I know all the springs around here,” said Tommy.

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"Then you know the roads?"

"Every cowpath."

"Are you familiar with Turner's Pass?"

"There's a by-road on each side of it leading up and over," said Tommy, with a sudden inspiration.

"Good God!" exclaimed a staff officer. "Hear that!"

"Mount, mount, my man!" cried McClellan, excitedly.

"You're worth a whole army corps!"

Tommy waved a good-bye to Po as he passed down Catoctin slope, riding crupper to crupper with the general commanding.

Po could not get on, because the road was still gorged with troops. She was obliged to idly watch South Mountain battle afar. Minute by minute it grew. The roar was constant; rocks trembled under foot, even on Catoc-tin; sharp, quick flashes came intermittently out of the distant smoke clouds. Po saw the Union lines sway and sag and surge upward. Now the crest of the mountain was a streak of flame; again the dark, forest-clad acclivity, with its ledges and crags, seemed like the menacing front of a monster cloud heaving up out of the west, and upon this cloud pigmies were contending in a game pitched upon Titanic scale.

Then, with night, the rumbles lessened, the flashes became infrequent, the Sanitary wagons took the road. Po and Jule passed between rows of dead men heaped at either side of the pike; they paused for a while at a Confederate hospital on the crest, whence amputated arms and legs had been tossed in great numbers down the mountain-side, and at daybreak reached a church filled with wounded. "Little Sisters" was the name of the church, and here the Little Sister of the Dying set up her flag.

At sunrise a keen west wind dispelled the mountain mist. Towards Harper's Ferry cannon thunder began, but in the debouch of the main army through the gaps

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into Antietam Valley the liveliest sounds came from brass bands playing the Potomac quickstep. In National Turnpike two corps were marching abreast, and in the space between the infantry columns trundled artillery. With music and fluttering flags and a brilliant sun playing upon rivers of steel, the sight was full of inspiration. It was interesting to watch the men. Those who had come out of the heavy battles in Virginia were quiet, a bit grim, sure in their stride. In contrast were the fresh-faced thousands of the rowdy regiments lately mustered in. The recruits were boisterous and impressionable. When they reached South Mountain summit and, gazing west, beheld the panorama spread before them they broke forth in exclamations. Below, under a single sweep of the eye, were the seven corps of the Army of the Potomac. On that dazzling September day the plain itself altogether empty of men, would have charmed the senses now it had the added grandeur of an orderly multitude simultaneously executing a thousand movements. For once the blue had gone down off the mountain-tops into the bottom of the valley. The wind whipped out all the banners and all the guidons. Sun sparkle came from the horse-accoutrements and cannon and the vast of bayonets mile upon mile. It was as if the pick of the world and the pick of all its people were in view. That one pair of eyes should see so much!

By and by the cannon rumble in the south ceased. What did the silence signify?

After leaving Urbana, Johnsey rode all night towards the Blue Ridge. Very bitter were his thoughts of Rhett Archinel. Could he ever forget the flag-tearing scene? Could he ever forgive her? No, he would put her out of his heart. That was the last of it, the *last*! He would think of sterner things,—of McClellan's return, or seeming return, to power, and of the steady onward sweep of the reinspired masses of infantry. He would be

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for a brigade, and when he got it, would so handle it as to make people say, "That man's a fighter. He knows his business." And if he should be shot down, sword in hand, so much the better. "It'll all be the same a hundred years hence," hummed Johnsey, bitterly. Thus he tortured himself as he rode along under the stars, his heart-grief alternating with thrills of joy at thought of how good it would be to die right at the fore of a battle-line among those blue-topped mountains, whither, he doubted not, Rhetta would soon flee with those courtiers of hers—those knights in despicable gray jackets and tawdry plumes.

But the further Johnsey drew away from Rhetta the more his thoughts leaped to the project in hand. The message he had tried to send from Sugar Loaf to the Harper's Ferry garrison was that relief would be speedy. Cannon signals were to be exchanged. In addition he had hit upon a plan of his own.

"Why not take your force up Maryland Heights, drag batteries there, and hold on?" he suggested, as soon as he had arrived.

But the commandant demurred. In fact he had withdrawn a force from the heights. Halleck had said stay at the Ferry, and stay he would.

"What a chance he's letting slip!" reflected Johnsey, as in despair he left the commandant and walked among the men. They were gallant soldiers. He pitied them.

But what could he do? Should he resume his disguise, retrace his steps, and urge McClellan to drive forward with redoubled haste? By midnight Johnsey was at Point of Rocks; by daybreak far up Pleasant Valley. A Confederate infantry column obstructed the road he was to take in crossing South Mountain; so he hid among the bushes, lest he should be subjected to a running fire of questions. When the troops were out of the way he pushed on, following the valley road, which

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wound round a timbered hill and forked beyond. Watchful as he was, he could not avoid a cavalry officer who now came dashing towards him. Big-bodied and with a plume like Stuart's, the officer spurred up in the confident manner of one scouting with his troop at his back.

"Your command?" he shouted.

"The old Black Horse."

"Your name?"

"Chancellor Sproule."

"Dot ish von damn Yankee lie! He vas vid me dis minute," roared the officer. It was Von Borcke.

At the same instant, flourishing a revolver in his right hand, he gave his body a swing and with his left tore open Johnsey's gray jacket, revealing blue. But what Johnsey did was done with a quickness no eyes could follow. Whipping his sabre free, he struck Von Borcke's horse a violent blow with the flat of it and simultaneously spurred his own deep in the flanks. The beasts squealed, bit, plunged, and parted. Johnsey's struck sparks from the roadside rocks as he fled uphill. Shout upon shout came from Von Borcke's throat, shot after shot from his revolver. The air smoked. Under the fusillade, Johnsey's horse fell; and Johnsey sprang to cover in the thick foliage. Leaping from rock to rock, running with bent body from bush to bush, he heard Von Borcke roaring out to his men what had happened, and so directing them that escape from the hillside seemed impossible. He wondered how Chance and Will would look if Von Borcke should hang him before their eyes. And Rhetta? Would she who could so heartlessly tear the flag also scorn him in his peril?

Rhetta sat upon her horse in the road, enjoying the commotion. She was sunburned, and therefore unlike herself in looks; but in her laughing cry, "Chase him, major! Hoi, hoi!" she was Rhetta to the tip of her whip.

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Peter John was at her side.

"Did you hear Major Von Borcke say that this spy he is pursuing tried to personate your Cousin Chance?" asked Peter John.

Rhetta gave him a startled glance.

In an instant she remembered Johnsey's face at the window.

"Is it he?" she said, excitedly. There was a tingling through her to her dullest nerve. She sped round the bend in the road till she had reached Von Borcke, who was laying his trap before beating up the bush. Her ardor and beauty and vehemence as she drew sharply up, throwing her horse on his haunches, brought out exclamations.

"Ah, mees, a fox, a fox! You rides vell to hounds!"

"And you ride ill!" cried Rhetta. "What a stupid lot you are! I tell you, major, the fox is off up the valley road. I saw him break from cover and run straight up the road."

Von Borcke hesitated. But courtesy would not permit him to look incredulous. Rather was he charmed with the vivacity and eloquent gestures of the woman telling her beautiful lie. He had received a command. It seemed to him that her whip might fall across his face unless he should speedily obey her. And he obeyed, riding fiercely to regain lost time. Then Rhetta reined her horse up the hillside and rode among the bushes. Peering here and there, she called, softly: "Johnsey, Johnsey!" All was still among the bushes. A little louder she called: "Johnsey, Johnsey!" Her lash fell, and her horse sprang for the higher rocks. More boldly now she called, knowing Von Borcke to be by this time a long way off. Her voice rang and there was a world of pleading in it.

At last there was a parting of branches, a face appeared among the leaves, and Johnsey, crying: "Here

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I am; but, mind you now, I don't surrender!" came out from his covert.

Rhetta, down off her horse at a leap, ran to meet him, her bridle-reins over her arm.

"Oh, Johnsey," she pleaded, "take off that gray."

Her own fingers flew at the jacket buttons.

"I thought you wanted me to wear it," he said. In spite of his peril, his face showed acutest pleasure. He grudged the glances he was obliged to take watchfully over his shoulders.

"Not when it means death for you, Johnsey Sproule. Strip off my saddle. Now take my horse and go. They're off up the valley; you can escape down it."

"Do you love me so much, Rhetta?" said Johnsey, gravely. "How your heart pit-a-pats! And you're crying! Yank as I am, you love me. Sweet girl! Forgive me for thinking hard of you."

"Unclasp me and go. Go like the wind, Johnsey. You smother me, and my heart will fail me if you stay here any longer."

But Johnsey felt no fear. He felt that he could leap the mountains if need be, so great was his joy. As if in a swoon, Rhetta lay in his arms. She, feeling a thousand fears, was at the same time under entrancement with a thousand thrills and softnesses.

"Are you going to forget what you saw at Urbana?" she whispered.

"Ah, there indeed I was wounded, Rhetta. But I'll forget that and remember this till I die."

"And you'll go now," she pleaded, struggling to free herself.

"Once more," he said.

"Only once," she stipulated.

Long, long he clasped her; then he was up and off, and his blue showed bright as he sped towards Point of Rocks.

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1, carrying her saddle, her face flushed, her hair led, her habit torn, found Peter John in the road he had left him.

John laughed and talked, as he changed saddles, and staid Miss Archinel to mount his horse. "You tell me what happened, Miss Rhetta," he said. "the whole story. It's lucky you left Trix among horses this morning. I don't think you'd ever over it if she'd broken her leg up there among cks. And I don't believe you could have shot

1 stared at Peter John. She had been wondering how she could say in explanation to Von Borcke.

"How your horse fall," continued Peter John; "and about to run up to help you when I heard your shout, and I said to myself: 'Miss Rhetta don't . . . She's too full of pluck.' Did he die easy?"

1 thought of her own lie to Von Borcke, and so merrily at Peter John's lie that he too laughed, and they laughed together.

"You're a good soldier, Miss Rhetta," said Peter John, and I shall hurry on ahead and tell the major about our bad luck with your horse. Please keep me informed by the time you join us you'll have been saved the embarrassment of telling your exploit. I reckon the same as the spy before this."

While as he ran, Peter John made his way towards the campers, sheepishly returning from their chase.

By had Johnsey re-entered Harper's Ferry when the federate investment was complete. At sunset

Loudoun, and Maryland Heights were glittered with brass pieces. The Union garrison was as at the bottom of a pot with the enemy at the rim. A cannon from the mountain-tops must be endured or the flag shown. Rumor ran that it would be unfurled the next thing in the morning.

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It was dark in the meadow at the foot of Bolivar cliffs, where lay thirteen hundred Union cavalry.

"I understand you're going to try to escape," said Johnsey to the colonel commanding. "If so, I'd like to join you."

"Come on," said the colonel.

A whispered command passed down the column: "'Shoun! By twos! For—d, march!" And the squadrons passed out of the meadow and filed slowly along the pontoon spanning the Potomac. Johnsey rode with the commander. All was dark around. The waters swirled below. What might be encountered at the far end of the bridge no one knew. Sabres were kept from clanking, spurs from jingling. Only a "thump, thump," and a low rumble sounded over the water.

"It's luck so far," whispered the colonel, as the head of the column reached the Maryland end of the pontoon and rode out unchallenged upon the tow-path of the canal paralleling the Potomac. The practised trooper bent forward to his horse's ears, watchful in the darkness—ear under strain, eye under strain, but steady and well steeled to do whatsoever was to be done on that narrow berme side with swarming foes to his right and the river below. Johnsey, too, put the sound of tramping hoofs out of mind and listened acutely for sounds ahead—picket's footfall, click of trigger, challenge. Was that a gray-coated ghost? Oh, no; only starlight on limestone.

"Close up, close up!" passed down the line. The column was like some monster, interminable in length; but it wound on and on, ever inching northward, and finally its head passed into a sweet, cool underwood, where the scent of vines and flowers filled the air. Just beyond was the Antietam.

"I'm breathing a bit easier," ventured Johnsey. "My goose-flesh has been creeping for the last hour."



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" Silence! Listen!"

There was a halt by backward pressure, rumps against withers for a mile to rear. The column had almost brushed against a party of horsemen passing by a cross-road. Johnsey recognized Chance's voice.

" Rebs!" he whispered.

" Keep quiet!"

It was Rhetta's escort making for Shepherdstown Ford. Sunrise would see her in Virginia, her campaigning done.

Soon after this same sunrise Johnsey saw the blue torrent pouring over the mountain wall.




Chapter XXVII

ANTIETAM

JOHNSEY was not so anxious to win glory at the head of a brigade as he had been prior to his rescue by Rhetta. He was satisfied when assigned to General Mansfield's staff. It was midnight when they crossed Antietam Creek with the Twelfth Corps, following the First. Their men made beds of the furrows, awoke under a downpour of rain, shielded their muskets, and slept again. Before dawn there was an outburst of cannon thunder, which died down in a growl. For a while longer the katydids in the weeds at the sides of the fences sang "ke-zee, zee, zee," with long-drawn quaver. Slowly the morning came on. The grasshoppers put away their fiddles. The roosters at Piper's and Mumma's, Roulette's and Poffenberger's, and other neighboring farm-houses, crowed lustily.

Daylight, sifting through fog, brought the men to their feet. Eight thousand good, hearty laughs resounded. Such of the troops as had slept in the furrows were no longer boys in blue, but clay-covered wretches who surely would be shot that day in mistake for butternut "Rebs." Johnsey rode forward, under orders, to see what was to be seen at the First Corps front.

Three noble divisions were moving southward in line of battle. Fences fell before them. Tall corn swayed at the top from the jostle of men stealing between the rows. As yet the enemy's fire was light.

Johnsey saluted General Hooker, and made known the object of his mission.

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"The minute I develop the situation I'll let Mansfield know," said Hooker. He was a picturesque figure, sitting his superb white horse at the edge of an apple-orchard, whence his eye roved the field. "Do you see that white building in the grove beyond? That's a Dunker church. It faces Hagerstown pike. It's the first objective point. Tell Mansfield that. And tell him he'll see a strip of woods east of the pike and a thick woods west. The church is in the West Woods. It's the key to the field—that West Woods. We must take it."

Johnsey was about to dash away to the rear with his message, when something caught his eye. Sun-shafts had just shot through the mist, illumining the space between the East and West Woods.

"General," he exclaimed, "in that big corn-field this side the church I think I see something besides corn. It's thick with Johnnies, sir! They're ambushed there, waiting to give you 'Good-morning'! Look! Just look at 'em!"

A thousand bayonets in the tall corn gave off a glitter.

Hooker turned his glasses thither. "That's so," said he. "Why, I can see the corn shake for a space of thirty acres! Humph! I'll cut that corn!"

He motioned forward half a dozen batteries, which thundered up at a gallop. There was a breath-taking minute while the guns were getting into position. Knowing that they were unmasked, the enemy in the corn tried to cut down the gunners. In the orchard rain-laden leaves, twigs, shattered branches, came showering down. "Whoo-ee! whoo-ee!" sang a flock of swift-winged missiles overhead. Something splintered the rails of a fence nearby. Another something struck Johnsey's pommel so violently as half to unseat him. He let go his bridle-reins because of a sting on the hand, and bowed low as he kissed the blood from the back of it. His horse shied with a snort and a leap in the air, and

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turned tail; but he spurred him back to the spot where Hooker sat pointing towards the corn. Then, suddenly, with many white smoke puffs, quick and vicious and lit with a spew of flame, there outbroke a roar audible on the distant mountains. It was enough to stun a man and make him wish he were deaf. Johnsey's horse squatted under him in terror, but Hooker's stood like a lamb. Hooker himself had his lion-look on. He was watching his gunners hurl canister. The corn was cut as by a tornado, swath upon swath. Ears, split from the husks, became missiles that penetrated the bodies of men. Scattered grain, set awirl by the iron that struck it, stung and slew. Stalks flew into a million splinters which were driven into eyes, into flesh, even into bone. Presently, when the work was done, Johnsey heard a clamorous wail rise from the corn-field. Not all the wails that had gone up from the wailing wall in Jerusalem for a thousand years could have been so pitiful as this initial wail at Antietam.

Johnsey rode away. He must tell his chief of Hooker's onset—what he had seen in the corn-field near the old brick meeting-house; so ghostly at first because of the mist and its whitewash; so real and monstrous now because of the blood upon it. Musketry crackled for a mile. Each of the three divisions was gaining ground. Apparently Hooker's fierce battle was all that was needed to break Lee's left wing.

The Twelfth Corps was moving up in columns of battalion in mass, Mansfield at its head. His snow-white hair tumbled to his shoulders. As he rode, he took three red apples out of the breast of his blouse. One he gave to his big bay, one to Johnsey, the other he himself ate. Many fugitives obstructed the march.

"There's more trouble ahead than I thought there'd be," said Johnsey.

"There's no end of trouble," said Mansfield; "I've

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lived a long while in this world and I've found it every day. But to-day it's come in a heap." He tossed aside the apple-core. "It's time to deploy, sir," he added; and thereupon sent those about him skurrying off.

Johnsey lathered his horse with swift riding and fence-leaping and bramble-jumping, ducking his head in spite of himself when a shell came within hissing sound. He returned to his chief in time to hear Mansfield say:

"Those men in the woods there must be Hooker's."

"Oh, no, sir!" cried Johnsey; "they're the enemy! Please ride out of danger!"

"Yes, yes; you're right," said Mansfield. He turned towards a regiment then opportunely breaking into line. "Colonel," he shouted, "hurry up your men!"

The colonel that instant was shot through the forehead.

Mansfield searched with his eyes for the next in command. A minie-ball cut through his body at the breast, and he spoke no more, except with whispering lips, befoamed and bloody.

Johnsey threw out his arms to clasp and uphold his chief, when his own horse went plunging a rod to rear, where it fell. As soon as he had freed his feet from the stirrups he ran bounding back to the battle-line. He had been away but a trifling while, yet in that space the lieutenant-colonel had been shot, so had the major, so had the senior captain. Things were happening quickly.

"Let me lead you, men!" said Johnsey.

In front was a post-and-rail fence, so new the wood was still white; therefore, the men did not pause to measure muscle with the barrier. But it was a godsend that two of the panels were down, for whoever sought to climb the fence was shot while straddling the topmost rail. On either side of the open panels, through which blue streams flowed, many men went up with a quick,

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sly fling of their bodies, rolled over, and let themselves tumble to the ground. Some never got up. One man, caught under the cataract of boots and bodies and gun-butts, shrieked with a broken back. Thus the torrent of Twelfth Corps troops poured into the East Woods, whence the enemy vanished under cover of their own smoke.

Straight on through the woods ran the blue blouses till they came to another fence—a zig-zag of rails—at its western edge. Here was a sight, indeed!—a chance to burn powder! They thrust their gun-barrels between the rails and volleyed into the flank of a mass of Confederates, who were trampling the cut corn in a furious charge. The enemy's column broke in the wink of an eye. Again there was havoc. Again arose curses and hurrahs. Johnsey's men shouldered down the old snake fence with a crash and reformed for a countercharge. But, at the same moment, over the heads of the retreating Confederates came a shower of shells from the West Woods. Shrapnel cracked like exploding hornets' nests, scattering envenomed hail.

"Oo-oo-ooo!" grunted Johnsey.

"That's a finisher, cap!" said some one at his side.

"Not much," spoke up Johnsey; "it's only scooped a little flesh."

Yet he was weakened by the wound, and much disconcerted. He was borne along for a space by the charging-line; and then, as it swung back, was whirled meadowward till he fell exhausted in the bed of a wet-weather stream, now waterless but redolent of bruised mint and thick strewn with the fallen. Here for a time Johnsey lay wrestling to hold his senses in; but at last he lost them. Apparently he was as dead as his next neighbor, whose eyeballs were as of glass and whose meek suffering must have surprised the meadow-flies, seeing that for untold fly generations they had been accustomed to

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colt-tail switches and cow-tail switches and other protestations.

At this stage both battle-lines at the Dunker meeting-house were ugly—thin here, sagging there. But everywhere shells cracked and little hornets flew—angry, pinging, biting the air at one's ears, tossing up the dirt at one's feet, cracking knuckles, cutting through bone; in at the viscera and away; through the heart and pocketed somewhere in the dark of the body. So many men fell in the corn-field and in the adjoining meadow where Johnsey lay face down in the mint that blue showed thickly there as well as gray. In the corn-field alone were a thousand dead. This, too, by nine o'clock. Nevertheless, Hooker held on hour by hour. He broke through and beat back; and then himself was broken and beaten. At last, with a hole in his foot and a bootful of blood, he gave over his remnants to Meade, who rallied them near the spot whence the corps had set out in the gray of the morning. It had been a pitched battle, and no favors. By pure pluck and the help of God, each had sought to win.

When Johnsey regained his senses the battle was proceeding as furiously as ever. He got up, but threw himself down again instantly and crawled for shelter along the bed of the stream. He thus sought to screen himself because, only a little way off, advancing with a tread that shook the earth, he saw rolling forward a great surge of Second Corps men—Sumner's seven thousand, sweeping the field in a due-west rush that promised to overwhelm whatsoever might stand in their way. The fresh troops, still wet with Antietam water, came on in three lines, with arms at right shoulder shift. Johnsey heard the heavy breathing of the men, the low thunder of their feet, the sharp "hi, hi!" given off in a sort of animal fury, the hoarse objurgation, the cries of the officers. "Guide centre!" rang along the lines. Each

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regiment pivoted upon its flag, whipping back from its staff. Then, as Johnsey made himself small in the hollow, he felt the lines sweep over—saw the men above him glance quickly down, step high, and pass him with scarce the scraping of a shoe. But they were blundering. They should have headed southwest instead of west. The next instant masses of Confederate infantry emerged from cover behind the Dunker church, struck Sumner, flank and rear, and shattered him, hurling his remnants northward along the turnpike. Again things were happening quickly. Terrible was the slaughter in the Second Corps; terrible was the grief of the grand old general, who wept on the field.

Johnsey left the meadow. It was risking something to move to higher ground; but other wounded men were crawling, rolling, or limping along with muskets as crutches. Why should not he in the confusion regain the Union line? He crept on all-fours, inched along on his belly, ran when smoke or dust temporarily thickened the air, and finally reached a knoll, whence, peering southeastward, he saw fresh battle joined about a sunken road zig-zagging down from Dunker church to a ford of the Antietam.

This was a new phase of the conflict. Did he dare use his glasses? He could not help using them. Screening himself in the trodden weeds, he focussed upon the Sunken Road,—saw it strewn with the enemy's dead, saw hundreds captured, thousands fall, and beheld with thrills of joy the sweep of the Union front close up to the centre of the Southern line. He plainly saw the Confederate guns leaping from the ground as, roaring and spitting fire, they gave forth extra charges of canister; but he saw also that behind the guns were only those who worked them. Down off their horses were generals serving shot like privates. A bold dash would scatter them, and the war would end by sundown.

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Smoke soon shut out the Sunken Road from sight. Burning houses, burning barns, rolling musketry, leaping cannon—throughout an area of three miles—conspired to fill the air with battle vapor. The northwest wind was free; but the scene was vast and the smoke curtain anon became a pall.

Johnsey passed down into the hollow of the Antietam. A surgeon dressed his wound. Some kind soul gave him water. Exhausted, he stretched himself upon the ground. For him the battle of Antietam was as good as over. But throughout the afternoon he lay listening to the conflict on the left, where were re-enacted the morning scenes on the right—an heroic dash over a stone bridge swept by fire, furious assaults by tens of thousands, final repulse. With sunset ended the bloodiest one-day battle of the war.

Nightfall found Johnsey still afieled. It was grewsome and strange to him, sitting with prone figures almost within reach of his hand; and when he looked far and wide over the field, with its smouldering fires and flitting lights, a sense of sorrow and terror and the unpitifulness of God seized him. He was not on the crust of the sweet old earth where were bird-song and cricket-chirp and fireside joy and the thousand brightnesses he had known in times past; he was not on such an earth, but upon another world,—an outer, darker, more savage world; a far Plutonic spot in ether, where one breathed away his breath without hope of the mercy of the Lord Jesus. If one's soul may suffer an ague, that Johnsey's suffered—being projected in spirit thus away from this dear world and off into the outer space where there can be no warmth for the human heart. Even when death lays hold upon but one there is bound to be sorrow. But how when upon undug graves lie thousands—comrades of yours, better men perhaps than yourself, each lopped off of his loves and hopes?

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Johnsey heard Jule uttering dire threats against her horses. She was hauling water uphill from the Antietam. Po must be near. At once his distemper lessened. Why not go work with Po? He found her far to the front. All night he held her lantern for her. He was glad to be with her, because she warmed the world a bit for him. Partaking thus of her benignity, love, reverence, he felt that God was not unpitiful and that the old earth was still the home of kindness.

There was a cloud-burst on the 18th. Men were still lying upon the field. That night Lee withdrew across the Potomac, leaving in his trail at Shepherdstown and in the valley villages great numbers of sufferers. On the Maryland side fifteen thousand of the maimed were gathered in. These were bestowed in churches, school-houses, dwellings, barns. Po, pitching her tent by Smoke-town hospital, lingered there for many weeks.




Chapter XXVIII

LOVE

ALL this time Pasque lay at a Virginia farmhouse in the guerilla-infested region near the base of Great Cacapon Mountains; for at Antietam a minie-ball had pierced him, rib and lung. Pasque could not bear to be jolted farther from the battlefield, and it suited Peter John to loiter awhile in the debatable land between the armies. Under pretence of riding to Winchester to send for Mrs. Le Butt, he stole through the picket-lines, saw Johnsey, proceeded to Washington, stuffed his pockets with spy money, and returned to Cacapon with a scheme of tremendous deviltry in his head. The Union armies in the West were about to be paid. A train-load of greenbacks was soon to pass within pouncing distance of the Cacapon guerillas. These ruffians wore either the blue or the gray, as best fell in with their purpose. When they wore blue, gray was beneath; when in gray each had a white handkerchief tied about his neck with a knotted end of it falling over his shoulder, in which case they were Jessie Scouts—than whom no mortals were more fiercely hated by the real Confederate partisans of the Shenandoah Valley. Peter John shook at the knees when he disclosed his scheme to Fontaine, leader of the Cacapon band. He had known Fontaine, who was less soldier than sailor, at the gambling-tables in Richmond. Fontaine had failed in a design to fit out a privateer, and had cruised down the valley on adventure bent. His rendezvous was Gushing Springs Cove—a wild glen at the top of a mountain-gorge. Cliffs walled the glen

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about, so that it was inaccessible save at the sluiceway of a torrent foaming out of it. Through this gap, on a shelf of granite, a road just wide enough for a cart entered the glen. On one side rocks overhung the narrow passage, and a stone brushed from it on the other would have gone bounding down a steep slope into the creek. A building once the Gushing Springs Hotel was Fontaine's head-quarters, and his men were lodged in log-houses adjoining.

But now Fontaine was camped within sight of the farm-house where Pasque lay, constantly yearning for Po.

The farm-house was in a grove of oaks and hickories, and through his window Pasque watched the leaves flutter down. Far away in a road leading up to the house he saw a something on wheels, scattering dust. With the color upon the trees and the soft air and the charmingly quiet motions of the wild birds, there was balm over all and peace everywhere except in his own heart. That, just now, was the very seat of sadness. Even when he thought of his night of exquisite happiness at Grapevine bridge pangs followed, for he remembered that Po had remained utterly oblivious of her surroundings. So low was he in hope that he wished himself like the Mississippian to whom she had sung. In his fever he thought himself really the Mississippian; and her sweet voice sounded in his ears, and there arose within him an indescribable feeling of tenderness. If only she were with him he would be willing to die provided she would let him fondle her hand and kiss it and would give him just one look of love. And he would tell her she must never marry in this world, but keep herself free to join him in the next. That would be spirit wedlock, and he could be content with it, for what he loved in her was her spirit; and so she would be his and no matter at all if his body should rot and hers walk awhile longer

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in its sweetness and purity. How could it matter, since she would then be betrothed to him in all solemnity and could give herself to no man, but would be only his? But she was not with him. She was with Farrabee, rather. Farrabee would claim that sweet girl and would enwrap her with his spirit and mould her to himself, and in the years to come not a thought would she have of her Southern lover. Indeed, she would put his very image away from her, and time would make shadowy for her the recollection that such as he had ever breathed. So thought Pasque as he turned upon his pillow and wept and groaned.

Suddenly he felt a hand in his hair. It was softer than the hand of the farmer's wife. A glowing kiss-print sweetened his forehead. Perfume was present now, sunshine, excellence in all things.

"Oh, you have come," said Pasque; "or is it a vision I see in fever? Can it be you, Po Groudy, or am I out of my senses from thinking of you so much? Indeed, I feared for the moment I was out of my senses. But it is really you, my more than friend, my sweetheart!"

He was fondling Po's hand and kissing it and looking into very loving eyes; but he was no longer willing to die.

"Yes," she said, "it is really I; but I thought I should never find you in this rough country, with so many prowlers around. Johnsey Sproule sent me word about you; and Jule and I started at once in our ambulance to find you. And here we are to tend you and nurse you back. Oh, Pasque, it is dreadful that you should be suffering so! But I forbid you to talk till I see how your wound is. Will you obey me?"

"Oh, yes, yes, in everything," said Pasque, sunk in a stupor with his bliss.

Po redressed his wound, soothed him to sleep, sent a message about him to Oaks of Saul. Into Pasque's blood

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came wholesomeness and healing. Po's voice, sounding from a distant room, was music to him; he glowed when he heard her approaching step, and his pulses galloped when she lifted his head that he might drink. Thus day by day Pasque fed his ravenous love and was closer to happiness than he had deemed it possible ever again to be.

"My fear is I'm going to get well too soon," said he. "I'd like to be always just precisely as I am now—here under this coverlet, my wound behaving perfectly, you sitting by, looking as you now look."

Peter John occasionally glided in on the two. He had only to watch his master's eyes and mark the tell-tale note in Po's voice to determine that theirs was genuine love. Why had he said anything to Johnsey Sproule about Pasque's wound? If he had not, Miss Grouty would have kept away. What would Mrs. Le Butt think of him? He had not done his duty by her in the first instance, for he should have summoned her to Pasque's bedside; and now the very thing she had schemed to prevent had actually come about. She would attribute it all to his agency, and would denounce him as treacherous. Peter John whispered in Fontaine's ear. Had he noticed what a beauty the Yankee girl was? Fontaine told Peter John to mind his own business. Peter John, he said, was a boy. Pasque was a boy. He himself had gray in his beard. It was an enormous beard,—Fontaine's,—black and gray and flowing, and when he galloped fiercely the air split it, so that it formed a cataract at either side of his neck. He had eyed Po furtively, avoiding her look. But on the porch that evening he tossed away his cigar when she appeared, and with deference addressed her, asking after Pasque.

"It's a pity he was shot," he added. "I feel for the young lady down in Richmond to whom he is engaged. You know that he was to be married to the

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gent Miss Blight at the end of General Lee's present campaign."

There was in Fontaine's suave tone a kindly warning

Po, as he dwelt upon the devoted Miss Blight's charms of person and character. Po's own words were infused. She hurried into the hall and thence into Pasque's room. Pasque did not stir. She wondered if she had overheard Fontaine, and dared not speak to her from weight of guilt. She smothered an impulse to wish Pasque then and there with congratulations, and felt ashamed that she should have had such an impulse. He went away from his bedside and stood by the window, looking out into the moonlight. To the farmer's wife, who came in and asked her to read a chapter in the Bible, she excused herself and still stood for a long time looking towards the mountain-slope, bright in its autumnal glory under the moon. She fingered her bodice, pressing at her heart, and stood pale as the moon, thinking that in this world so much that might well be true should be so false. But all that is here, she thought, imperfect; and all that is there is perfect; and as God willed so be it. She prayed, with tears, by Pasque's side, and put her lips to his hand, and forgave him; and Pasque in his sleep smiled at the sweet healing that crept about his wound.

"What's the matter?" said he, suddenly, while she was dressing his wound next morning.

"Nothing," said she. "Why?"

Pasque was silent.

Po seemed to herself to be just as she had been before. He was, indeed, soft-handed, and her look was kind; but her fingers did not stray to his hair, and there was a lack of a caress in her voice. "Your wound is almost healed, Pasque," she said, cheerily; "and you have no fever at all."

She brought in his breakfast. Pasque tried to eat, but

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soon pushed the food aside. He looked at her beseechingly, and tears stood in his eyes. Then he turned his face away and sank into a troubled reverie, conning all that had happened between them the day before. Had he said or done aught to displease her? No; since the moment of her arrival there had been only an unruffled and joyous intercourse between them. Why, then, had she kept her hand from his hair? He missed out of her what he most desired. It was a delicate difference, but to him it meant everything. Again he stared at her questioningly. She sat by the window, reading some letters she had brought with her. Who had written them? Hardly audible was Pasque's groan as he turned his face away; but in his thoughts was a terrible thing. "Farrabee," thought Pasque; and, as he lay shuddering, Farrabee painted himself big and black and monstrous in his imagination. Po loved Farrabee! All was plain now. In her kindness she had come to save him by skillful nursing; and, having saved him, she would go back to Farrabee. That was why she had kept her hand from his hair.

The guerillas came dashing up from a night raid. There was much confusion in and around the farm-house. Pasque heard yells and curses. But he gave little heed to them, so great was the storm in his own heart. He hardly understood Po when she told him she had been sent for to attend some wounded men at the guerilla camp. He asked for Peter John. Yes, he would go to Richmond now. Where was Peter John?

Peter John failed to appear. He could not get out of bed, he protested. His lumbago was frightful. In truth, Peter John had been with the guerillas on their green-back raid and had been wounded by the train-guard. Many of the raiders had been killed. Fontaine himself was bloody under his beard.

Fontaine waited on the outskirts of his camp till Po,

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after dressing many wounds, started in her ambulance towards the farm-house. With him were his lieutenants and a hundred men, all mounted and in readiness to dash away for the recesses of the Great Cacapon.

"You are a Union spy," said he to Po, as he intercepted her; "I have orders to apprehend you. Please consider yourself under arrest. You will accompany us at once."

"Oh, no; I'm not a spy," said she; "why should you think me such? It's true I'm a Union army nurse; but I had permission to come here; and you know why I came. If you really regard me as a spy, Major Le Butt will undeceive you."

"Do you not recognize me?" asked Fontaine.

Po looked intently into his evil face. She was puzzled for a moment. Then terror drove the blood to her heart. Even Jule grew ashy, catching up the terror.

"Mozambique!" gasped Po.

"Yes," said the guerilla. "Mozambique! I remember that word. Why you said it then and why you say it now I don't know. It's a fool of a word. You said it then and you say it now, and you may say it as often as you please and as long as you please; but I've arrested you in obedience to orders, and I'm going to take you with me. You'd better make the best of it and come along, and trust me to get you out of your spy scrape. Many a girl round here would be proud to be called queen of Fontaine's men."

The guerillas did not understand this scene, but sat with drawn revolvers waiting the word to dash towards the mountains.

Po sat like one overwhelmed.

"Get down out of the ambulance," said the Sea Hawk to Jule. But Jule did not budge.

"I'll show you," said he to Po, "how I despatch business." He shot Jule from her seat. As she tumbled to

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the ground, he gave over his horse to the care of an aid, mounted by Po's side, and whipped away up the mountain-road, his rangers following.

Jule lay awhile unconscious. Then she got up. The pistol-shot had struck her skull and glanced, ploughing a furrow in her scalp without cracking bone. Blood covered her and blinded her; but gradually the confusion of her senses lessened. Directly she reached the farm-house and told Pasque what had happened.

Pasque put a foot out from under his bed-covers and touched the floor. Needles shot through him.

"Don't try to get up," pleaded the farmer's wife. "It will kill you if you do."

"Reach me my clothes," said Pasque; "my boots, I say!"

A terrible anger was in his face.

"Reach me that sabre there—my pistols! Jule, saddle my horse for me. Ah, God!"

There had come a gush of blood from his wound.

"Saddle him quick, Jule. The cartridges, madam! Damn it, madam, the full string! Which way did they go?"



Chapter XXIX

PURSUIT

PASQUE stood up, staggered, and, clutching a bedpost, clung there. Vertigo seized him, and darkness came over his eyeballs as though blinds had been drawn upon them. He fought with himself till he had whipped away his weakness. Then he stood straight. Jule and the farmer's wife lifted him into his saddle. In a moment he was off, reeling at the first forward plunge, but regaining his balance and sitting thereafter with steadier seat.

Pushing for the road that led up the mountain-gorge, Pasque suddenly drew rein at the abandoned guerilla camp. On a bed of fodder lay one of the wounded men left behind. Conspicuous in the camp litter were some bloody handkerchiefs with knotted ends. This was a revelation to Pasque.

"You're no Confederate," he cried, thrusting his pistol into the man's face. "Your gang's made up of Jessie Scouts. Is it not so? Tell me the truth."

"Yes," was the confession; "you're right. Fontaine plays double."

"I ought to kill you," said Pasque; "but I'll sell you your life if you think enough of such a wretched thing to buy it of me."

"Name your price," said the scout.

"Tell me how I can get at Fontaine and save the woman who dressed your wound for you."

"Lower your pistol. It's a bargain. I'd swap all I know any day for my life, miserable as it is. But I'd tell you anyhow, for I've had enough of Fontaine and his

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Jessies. He shot me with his own hand when I held back last night."

Thereupon the scout told Pasque of Fontaine's haunt in the Cove and the winding road up to the gorge. "But the best thing you can do," he added, "is to take the path and follow it and cut him off. The path's shorter than the road, though it's steeper; and once in the Cove, unknown, you can hide till dark and then steal away with the girl."

Pasque reined his horse about. That instant lead whizzed at his ear. The scout, snatching a hidden rifle from the fodder, had shot at his back.

"You dog!" said Pasque; "you told me the truth, thinking you'd let it out of me before I left you."

He killed the bushwhacker at a shot, and once more was away.

This incident had great weight with Pasque. It disclosed vividly for him the desperate character of the men with whom he had to deal. There could be but one outcome of the situation involving Po's life and his own if he should overtake Fontaine and enter into a parley for her release,—he would be shot to death, she would go to a misery most horrible to contemplate. Agonizing thus, Pasque turned his horse into the mountain-path and urged him upward.

The beast took the mountain with courageous bounds. It seemed that what he had lived for all his days was to do just this. Marches had been as nothing, battles as nothing; it was his to go up the shoulder of Great Cacapon, bold and wild, with cascades tumbling about and the frightened quail scattering in their wing-thunder out from beneath his hoofs. His hams fell, his back straightened, his muzzle grazed the ground. Powerful in the haunches, blooded, and now frantic from the ceaseless jabs of his rider's spur, he rose and rose, blowing the leaves from the path with the vent of his wind and

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strewn his trail with the drip from his reeking body. Up and up he went, and at last came to a level stretch under a forest that was all scarlet and gold and beautifully strewn with leaves; but here he fell, first upon his knees and then upon his neck, and out from each nostril was a great gush of blood.

Time had been gained; but time was here lost, for Pasque was long unconscious from the fall. At last he revived.

Regretting now the impetuosity which had driven him to urge his brute friend to death, he sat among the beautiful leaves, turning over in his mind what was best to do. Fortunately, the ascent had been made. He would be able to reach the Cove road by following the path, but he must economize his strength. He walked slowly through the forest, and at last came to a rock overlooking the road. The rear of Fontaine's column had passed and was in sight up the gorge. What could he do?

Pasque resolved to lie among the rocks in hope that some straggler would come along. He would kill the straggler and possess himself of another horse. Then he would ride in among the scouts, and shoot and slay and bear Po off in his arms, and nothing should withstand him. Hidden as he was, squirrels came around him and partridges drummed in his ear. Then among the trees he saw what he doubted not was a mounted picket. He sighted with his pistol; a deer sped away. Presently there were hoof-strokes on the stones in the road below. His heart leaped and there was a surge in his arteries. Again he raised his pistol, but lowered it and looked in wonder. Chance and Will were riding side by side in the road, and behind them, toiling up, was a squadron of Stuart's cavalry. Why they were opportunely by, as if God had guided them hither, came to Pasque in a flash. Po had sent word about him to Oaks of Saul, and they had crossed the valley to see him. Then, Jule,

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at the farm-house, had urged them on; and here they were.

Pasque hugged the young cavalrymen at their meeting, and they begged him to mount a led horse and go back, and leave Po's rescue to them; but soon he was speeding with them up the road, and in a little while they were in among the scouts with whoops and pistol-cracks and clash of sabre.

While Fontaine's rear-guard was fighting with the cavalry, Fontaine himself was placing dismounted men in a log house which stood at the Cove end of the passage; and presently from loop-holes in the house were thrust the barrels of rifles covering the retreat of the scouts and guarding the entrance with fire. The scouts who were contending with the cavalry saw that their stronghold was safe, so, abandoning some wagons laden with powder and plunder, they dashed away and passed in at the mouth of the glen.

All this time Pasque's fury had urged him on towards the glen, but his rage had availed him little. Bitter and breathless and weak, he sat among the troopers who sheltered themselves by the side of the passage, conscious that a dash along the narrow road would end fruitlessly in blood. Nevertheless, Pasque called for volunteers among the cavalry, and a dash was made; and it all came out just as the cooler heads expected. Horses cumbered the passage,—which was now choked,—and nothing that lived, as it seemed, could go through. At least by day. Possibly with darkness Pasque would attempt it again, for clouds were rising and would hide the moon; but he must be mindful of the narrowness of the place and ride close in under the rocks, else by misdirection he might plunge into the gorge. But there was no opportunity for him to break his neck in this way. At dusk a fire that cast its light along the passage sprang up in the Cove. The scouts scoffed the cavalrymen, and Pasque felt hope sink in his breast.

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A ruse was tried. The troopers lit pine-knots and cut blazing farewells in the air and made believe to hurry off down the mountain. The stratagem failed, and the tension grew. Chance and Will roped themselves together and ventured into the gorge, reconnoitring as in a wolf's throat. The fire-glow in the passage deepened the gloom there. The chief danger of discovery lay in the rifle-flashes which from time to time came from the log house where, as was evident, Fontaine had bestowed the pick of his men. Indeed, this house had been moved to its present position to fill the very purpose it was now serving. In order that it might the more perfectly command the passage, it had been pushed out beyond the edge of the ravine, on the slant of which it was upheld by a heap of stones loosely cemented by reckless men who loved fighting better than work. In their first observation Chance and Will, like practised soldiers, had seen the weakness of this stone support. Now they were placing the captured powder around it. Above was a floor of split puncheons upon which they heard the thump of gun-buttocks and the scraping of many feet. Fontaine, sitting his horse in rear of the house, glanced towards them and rode nearer. He looked down into the gorge. Then, turning, he fixed his eyes again upon the passage, and the young cavalymen laid their fuse.

Meantime, Pasque sat at the head of the squadron, waiting. In front of him were a score of men on foot, ready to run forward to roll the obstructing horse carcasses into the ravine. All that was wanted was the signal.

It came quickly. For of a sudden now, with a vivid leap of light, the blast broke forth, followed by the crackling of timbers, shrieks, outcries. The house, robbed of its prop, stood in air for a moment, then tumbled far down the gorge.

As Pasque rushed into the Cove he saw Fontaine. The

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Cacapon leader, witnessing the destruction of his band and seeing the inpouring of the cavalry, spurred his horse towards the building where Po was confined. He may have meant to seize her and bear her away by some secret path making up among the cliffs, which showed dark around, or he may have meant to ride with her into the ravine; but by the light of the fire he saw Pasque at his heels, and, turning in his saddle, split the air with pistol-shots, crack upon crack, fiercely and vengefully and with monstrous curses. Then he reached backward and thrust his revolver against his adversary's breast. But that instant Pasque's sabre whistled and fell with a cleaving stroke, quick as lightning, and to Fontaine as crushing. It cleft him—hat, scalp, and skull—to the roots of his tongue, and his carcass rolled from his saddle to a rock, whence it slipped like an elusive reptile into the dark of the gorge.

Pasque was in a faint when Chance and Will found him. Po was with them. All were anxious to leave the Cove. With their wounded in the captured wagons and Po in her ambulance, the cavalry hurried out through the passage and descended the mountain, torch-bearers leading. Pasque's head was in Po's lap. They rode in silence,—for he was still too spent for speech and she had not as yet come quite out of her terror. That Jule had not been killed was a matter for thankful prayers. And there was another thing. In all the torture of her captivity it had been a sweet thought to her that there had been a sinister purpose in Fontaine's tale. He must have invented it. That she could have thought Pasque capable of duplicity was amazing to her. She felt that she had wronged him. And some time she would tell him so. But as soon as he should recover sufficiently to go with the cavalry she herself must return to her work.



Chapter XXX

THE WOODS BY THE PASTURE

SOLDIER spirits haunt the far-extending heights known as the Blue Ridge. Looking upon these mountains one is reminded of the masses that trailed along their slopes, camped in their shadows, fought within sight of them. No; it cannot be that the ancient Blue Ridge caught up the least bit of its color from the armies of 1861-65. Yet the beautiful range must ever remain their monument.

But as seen by Rhetta from the portico at Oaks of Saul the Blue Ridge was not blue. The mountain-sides were robed in reds and russets and browns. There were patches of gold in the ravines; on the summit, trees, all scarlet, flamed like massed banners. The blue was below where McClellan's hundred thousand lay. West of the mountains was Lee.

"Hit hain't nuffin' mo' ner less den er sea er blue-bellies," said Eph, impressed with the splendor of the pageant, as McClellan, seizing the Gaps, marshalled his glittering host towards the Rappahannock. The Potomac on the north and the James on the south break through the Blue Ridge; but the myriad fountain-streams of the Rappahannock issue from its side, unite, flow southeastward, tumble the tidewater falls at Fredericksburg, and pass in an ever-broadening river to the distant Chesapeake.

"Yes, it's a sea," sighed Rhetta; "and, alas! a devouring sea. Do you think Bonnyclabber will come up out of it?"

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She had watched for Johnsey by the hour from a window of her room.

"En co'se he's er-comein'," said Eph; "hain't he bound ter see his ma?"

And soon Johnsey reached the Oaks on a flying visit. He was brown-faced and hearty, and looked to Rhetta who ran down to greet him, as though he had never had a battle-scratch in his life. On his shoulder was a new star, for he had been assigned to the command of a brigade in the Second Corps.

There were manoeuvres in the hall and on the stairs and Rhetta eluded his embraces as she led him to his mother. Later, when he reappeared on the porch, only Eph was there.

"Where is she?" asked Johnsey.

Eph looked everywhere about the house for Rhetta talking as he searched. He had heard her say she had lost something and was going in search of it. Chagrin came over Johnsey's face. He thought Eph provokingly slow and unsympathetic. It was just like a garrulous old darkey to take up his precious time telling him about Rhetta's beautiful colt in the pasture at the forest edge when what he wanted was to find Rhetta herself. That instant he changed countenance. Perplexity vanished.

"Ah, you old rascal!" he cried.

"Yah, yah!" laughed Eph, as Johnsey sped for the pasture.

The colt stood with his head over the bars, looking into the woods.

"Rhetta, Rhetta!" called Johnsey.

No answer came. He hesitated for a moment, then passed into the forest. The bright leaves around were as leaves from trees in paradise. Underfoot they rustle overhead they quivered, down through the air they soft floated. There were squirrels in the nut trees; and the



TIME DIED FOR THESE TWO

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THE WOODS BY THE PASTURE

too, floated in the air, and all was grace and lightness and joy.

"Rhetta, Rhetta!" he shouted, calling as she had called the day her escort had chased him.

A nut whizzed past his ear. He looked around. Another fell at his feet. A third struck him. There was a laugh at that, and from a swing of vines Rhetta leaped to earth.

"Here I am," said she; "but, mind you, I don't surrender."

"What was it you lost?" he asked.

"You, stupid. You!"

The sun glinted. The squirrels said "Chut, chut!" and pattered down nuts, and scampered above them. The colt waited patiently at the bars to be stroked. Very patient was the colt at the bars, but not more so than Eph, grazing Johnsey's horse in the pasture.

Time died for these two. It had driven them at their last meeting and torn them apart; now there was no such thing as time.

Yet, unaccountably, Rhetta passed from playfulness and perfect happiness into sighs. A strange heaviness fell upon her heart.

"Oh, Johnsey," said she, "I wish this war would end before you go into another battle!"

But Johnsey was flushed and elated and eager in his love, and the more she revealed her fears the happier he became. For once she was the graver of the two. Oh, it had lasted so long—this dreadful war! She had heard of so many sorrows it had brought upon people. Tears showed in her eyes, and she was pale and trembling and overwrought with her emotions and clung to Johnsey and sighed to see him go. Indeed, on that beautiful autumn day the sleek-coated colt waited in vain at the bars for Rhetta's caress.

Johnsey hurried down the mountain-side and rode



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swiftly back to camp. Great things were happening there. Burnside had superseded McClellan. And, directly, like the fountain-streams of the Rappahannock, Burnside's streams of men flowed down towards Fredericksburg.

Dreadful Fredericksburg!



Chapter XXXI

CHANCELLORSVILLE

BY way of Halifax, Nassau, and a blockade-runner, Chockley Sproule wrote from Canada to his wife at Oaks of Saul:

"And now, Marcia, for the rest of it, I'm going to scold. I'm shocked at the loose way you're looking after the twins. Why do you let Chance and Will keep so close to the heels of that dare-devil Stuart? Are you flattered because he calls them his 'right and left bower'? What tomfool stuff! Do the dunces imagine they can be Pelhams or Willie Pegrams? I tell you, Marcia, I feel aggravated. I hear tales that astound me about their shooting tincups off each other's heads and hunting Jessie Scouts and larking it night and day worse than Mosby or McNeil or Harry Gilmor. Now, I'm going to put a stop to it. I've written to Richmond, requesting that the boys be sent to guard some conscript camp or prison. If they grumble, tell 'em I say *one's enough!* I suppose you've had the terrible news long ere this; nevertheless, I enclose a clipping from a Yankee newspaper. It knocked me over when I first read it."

Marcia, all a-tremble, scanned the slip. "One's enough!" echoed in her mind. Yes; Johnsey's name, underscored, was in the Fredericksburg list of casualties! Mortally wounded! She cried softly to herself a while; then she went to Rhetta, and they cried together. Much of the light in the world vanished for Marcia. Out from under the skin of her neck and temples, where tiny veins had shown all her days, the flesh sank, leaving wrinkles. With the hollows came pallor. Of her beauty was left only a certain pure comeliness of forehead befitting the sorrowful blue eyes beneath. She resolved to go claim

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the body of her son. Suddenly hope sprang in her heart. It was born of a message from Po Groudy. Hospital air, wrote Po, had been as so much poison to Johnsey; therefore, she had taken him to a wholesome spot on the Blue Ridge—the Bee Farm.

With passports from General Stuart, Marcia and Rhetta set out for the Bee Farm at once, Eph accompanying. Chance and Will saw them as far on the way as the color of their jackets would permit.

The young troopers were put to shame by their father's letter. Kelly's Ford had just been fought, and Pelham had been killed, and every bell in the South was tolling for him. And here they were—the pets of the cavalry—about to be discredited!

They took their grievance to General Stuart, who was in a teasing mood, and hummed them a heart-breaker in his saddest voice:

“Den lay down de shubble an’ de hoe,
En hang up de fiddle an’ de bow;
Dar’s no mo’ wuk for po’ ole Ned,—
He’s gone whar de goo’ darkies go!”

“Please, general,” begged Chance.

“Oh, please,” pleaded Will.

“How comes it you’re sporting around on Trix and Lady Kit?” asked Stuart. “You’ve sent your own nags on ahead to that conscript camp, I reckon; and had to borrow Miss Archinel’s? Oh, you renegades!”

Then he dropped his badinage.

“Never mind, boys,” said he; “that Richmond order hasn’t come yet; and maybe I can head it off. At any rate, we’re going to have some fun before it gets here. You stick to me. We’re going into the Rappahannock Wilderness to-night. You’ll hear the bugle in five minutes. Something big is up, I reckon. The scouts say Mr. Yank is out for scalps.”

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True enough, something big was on foot. Hooker, who had succeeded Burnside and who had reorganized and reinspirited the Army of the Potomac, had begun an "On to Richmond" campaign, conceived in the very truest and boldest strategy. He had thrown his ten thousand sabres far up the Rappahannock to smite Lee's communications; and now at the various fords of that river and the Rapidan was skilfully thrusting across corps after corps. With secrecy and celerity, they were concentrating at Chancellorsville—which was not a "ville" at all, but a cross-roads place where of old had lodged and dined rich planters travelling by coach-and-four towards the Federal City or the Virginia Springs. Squat and spreading, with Doric porch pillars lending it superficial dignity, the Chancellor House stood in a grove of elms fronting Orange plank-road, along which Hooker stretched his five-mile line. It was to be the pivot of a tremendous battle whirl.

Stuart was riding with the First and Third Virginia. He entered the Wilderness from the west. It was the prime of the year—the last day of April. Under the low-spreading foliage and tangle of vines was an endless carpet of green, dotted with innumerable patches of blue blossoms. Here by Brock Road, where a year hence stupendous battles were to be fought, would stretch the far-famed forest of the five thousand skulls; but Chance and Will saw only the virgin beauty of the woods, unspotted and unscorched. It was twenty miles long and fifteen miles wide, this Spottsylvania Wilderness. In places limb locked with limb, hiding the haunt of deer and wild turkey. As evening came on, the air among the black-jacks and dwarf oaks and pines and hazels grew sweet with the all-pervading fragrance of the wild vine.

Past Todd's Tavern, Stuart turned into Catharpin Road and moved in columns of fours towards Chan-

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cellorsville. Moonlight fell among the trees in dappling flecks and patches and filled the forest with ghosts. There was a witchery in the woods that night. Had a humped dwarf taken stand in the middle of the road and pulled off his little cap and asked toll of the troopers riding with their sabres under their legs, silently, it would have been in keeping with the scene. Of course, the ghosts were only beautiful dogwood blooms, snow-white under the moon; but it was as if the spirits of the thousands who had fallen here in the heart of Virginia were holding conclave. Far ahead the horsemen glimpsed them and down the bridle-paths and in the woodland spaces to the very limit of vision.

But, so far from a squeaky "Who comes?" by a humped dwarf in green, there cracked a sharper challenge. On a sudden, carbine fire flew in a sheet across Catharpin Road.

"Forward!" sang out Stuart to his advance guard. Dark as it was, it was light enough for a fight. There was a rush, a resounding crack of pistol-shots, a clash, and a commingling of horses and men. Sabres cut moonshine and something harder. Saddles spilled blue and spilled gray.

Following the first set-to, all was so still one could hear horses snort and men whisper. Then, at the same moment, the bugles on either side sounded the charge. How it happened no one knew, but Stuart's two regiments fell upon each other and cut and slashed till outcries arose: "Friends! We're friends! You're killing your friends!"—which was a panic-breeding thought, indeed, in the strangeness of the night there, with bewildering things abroad. Not a trooper but went a-whirl in his wits. The blue-jackets, fighting at cross-purposes, stampeded, and Stuart's whole command exploded like a shell. Stuart himself spurred full tilt rearward, bending to the neck of his beast, expecting minute by minute the

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stroke that seemed in air for him—pushed along break-neck, in fact, by the torrent of horsemen following, but driven chiefly by the thought which dominated all: Why strike when the man you smite may be your dearest friend?

Thus milk ran in the veins of the brave; and not a runaway dashed into copse or brier-clump too thick or thorny to plunge through.

Chance was one of the pieces of the exploded shell. When he checked Lady Kit in her terrified flight his face and hands were bloody with scratches. He had ducked and dodged and dived till all his strength was gone. Riding a midnight steeplechase among ten thousand trees brings no joy to the jockey. Lady Kit's sides heaved and fell pitifully. Her head hung so low the wind from her nostrils blew the sand. They were safe in a moonlit spot, with a dense thicket encircling. Night-birds, startled, flapped their wings in the taller trees. When Lady Kit's heavy breathing ceased, Chance listened. He heard only the whippoorwills and the frogs in the swampy bottoms, thrumming on a single fiddle string. He gave a hoot-owl cry. Maybe Bud Willie would hoot in answer. He thrust the ends of his fingers in his mouth and whistled their own particular whistle. But the whippoorwills kept up their calls. He was as though encircled by them. Chance left the thicket and hour by hour rode among the pines and dogwood ghosts, hoping that Will was likewise searching for him. Finally to a low call came an eager answer. The brothers were reunited.

But they alone peopled this outland and realm of the whippoorwills. White mist in the tree-tops curtained the moon. For a long time all was as a maze to them. Yet they did not like to unsaddle and tie themselves to Trix and Lady Kit and wait for day. Bears might be about—bears and Yankees! Accordingly they followed

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a path into an old road and then followed the road as far as it led, which was to an ore pit near the confluence of the Rapidan and Rappahannock, where once the colonists had mined for gold. Daylight came. Federal vedettes were seen. For safety, the lads stole back into the forest, still unable to pick any meaning out of the maze.

But before the sun was an hour high a cannon roar broke out to the east.

"That's the music, Bud Willie," said Chance; "we've got our bearings at last."

They rode towards the sound, but cautiously, using the forest paths. One of these led to the crest of a little hill. Beyond was a clearing pierced by Orange plank-road.

"Look-a-there!" cried Chance, excitedly, peering through the branches; "that's a whole army corps down there. As blue as git-out."

"It's the top-end of the Yankee battle-line," said Will. "Ain't we in a pretty fix?"

"Fix?" said Chance, "I call it *luck*. We'll spy them, Buddie, and skin around 'em and report."

Like good scouts they counted guns and standards. Then they took the time. It was just noon. After that the boys were happier and more alert. They eluded the Union patrols, and by a wide *détour* reached the Southern lines. A giant of an engineer who was studying the old ore roads along the Union front quizzed them and advised them to go straight to General Lee.

It was far in the night when the lads reached headquarters. There was no house near—not even a tent. The top of a towering pine showed dark this side the stars. Along the Furnace Road was a screen of lesser pines. Roundabout staff-officers lay, their heads resting in the sink of their saddles and their horses tethered near.

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"You'd better not wake the general," said the guard; "wait till morning."

There was a stir among the branches.

"What's wanted?" asked General Lee, in a low voice.

"Two scouts are here," explained the guard. "Major Hotchkiss sent them, sir. They were in last night's skirmish on Catharpin Road, got lost, spied the enemy's right wing up there by Wilderness Church, and stand ready to give an account of what they saw."

"You've been hiding in one of Governor Spottswood's gold-mines, have you?" laughed General Lee, when the moonlight had disclosed to him the youth of his visitors; "why didn't you crawl under the bed of the Rapidan?"

Chance was shy of great men. Feeling the boy shake under his hand, General Lee added:

"You're cold, my son. So am I. It's a chilly night. Lead your horses in under the big tree, and we'll scrape some twigs together and start a fire. I'll hitch your horses. Go pile up some kindling. But don't disturb General Jackson."

"That's him," whispered Will; "there he is fast asleep with the moon in his mouth. I never saw his mouth open till now."

"Nor I," said Chance; "he always keeps his jaws set like a bulldog."

The boys cracked the twigs across their knees and fanned the flame with their hats. General Lee was interested in Lady Kit. Stooping, he clasped her about the pastern.

"Very shapely," he exclaimed; "beautiful! I'll venture to say this mare has a springy step. Always look to the pastern," he added, as he fed the fire with twigs; "if it's straight, go shy. A cavalry horse should be well-boned and well-muscle, with a short-barrelled back,

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strong haunches, good legs, and round, hard feet. Little pinched feet don't last long, and splays are bad."

The boys were put at their ease. Horses were their passion. They knew the horses of Stuart's corps better than Stuart knew his men. They asked General Lee about his own horses—Richmond, Brown Roan, Ajax, Lucy Long, Traveller.

"That's Traveller standing over there looking at us," said the general; "he's got a good head—small, as you see, but broad between the eyes. We're very fond of each other. He'll do anything for me, and I'll do anything for him."

By this time the fire had set the shadows dancing.

"Now," said General Lee, as he warmed his hands over the flames, "suppose you tell me what you saw when you spied the enemy's right."

Chance looked at Will, Will at Chance. The general smiled.

Just then General Jackson threw aside his blankets, arose, and stretched his six feet of bone in air. He yawned as he approached the fire, pulled down his cap brim, and glanced towards the boys.

"Um," he muttered; "I hoped it was Jed Hotchkiss."

"It's the next thing to it, general," explained Lee. "Major Hotchkiss fell in with these young men and despatched them to us. I'm glad you're awake. It's been a quiet night—hardly a shot."

"I think I slept with my ears open, sir," said Jackson, somewhat querulously.

Lee turned to Will.

"Tell General Jackson," said he, "how you came to be on the enemy's right flank."

Jackson listened to Will's story. Chance watched the listener's eyes. The desire to put in a word here and another there seized him. His diffidence was gone. Simple truth and clarity welled up within him. His eyes

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sparkled, his lips parted, but he held his peace. General Lee saw how eager Chance was.

"Now," said he, "your brother has brought us within sight of the enemy; take your turn; tell General Jackson what you saw."

Chance drew a vivid picture of the Union flank in air. He thought some of the general's questions unnecessary. Had the enemy field-works? Rifle-pits? Were there slashings? How as to the roads? Stop! What was that? A plank-road and a pike a mile apart, and the pike cuts straight into the Yankee rear?

Jackson gave a sharp "Ah!" and looked at Lee, who snapped off a stick and drew a V on the ground.

"That's it," said both boys, eagerly.

"How thick was the underbrush between the two roads? Could you chase a rabbit there? Could a buck with horns break through?"

"Yes, indeedy, general," said Chance; "forty niggers huntin' a coon could do it barefoot."

Lee smiled. Evidently Jackson was satisfied.

"That'll do," said he. "Curl yourselves up here by the fire and snatch some sleep. I'll want you at day-break."

But neither slept a wink. From their bed of pine-shatters they could see the two generals, each seated upon a cracker-box, talking earnestly. There was much to debate. Twenty-five thousand of Lee's men were still at Fredericksburg; Jackson would take away twenty-five thousand; that would leave Lee but ten thousand to hold the long line in Hooker's front. The risk was enormous. Directly the fire died down, and General Lee lit a candle in an old brass lantern. By the beams of this he and the Great Flanker arranged their plans. In the top of the giant pine, Chance and Will saw the creep of day. It was Saturday morning, May 2, and a playful sun soon dabbed the fleece clouds with pink.

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It was a roundabout march for the gray column; but, once across the plank-road and the pike, the men formed with ease. Facing to the right they were in line of battle. In the roads were the batteries. Hovering near was the cavalry.

Chance and Will led General Jackson to the hill-top whence they had spied so fruitfully the day before. Yes; there they were—the same far-extending blue ranks, abatis in front, stacked arms in rear. They were still busying themselves with the little matters of a soldier's life—slaughtering cattle, cooking supper, playing cards, chatting, smoking. Smoke from a hundred fires ascended. The pot odor of good beef floated into the nostrils of Jackson's men. Spoil was here. Loot, grub, and victory! The hungry gray host lurking in the forest caught wind of richness and was eager to be on. And all this time the blue host was off guard. Battle could not fall upon the right of the army. "Old Joe" Hooker had done the cunning, clean thing. He had put himself in the right spot to force Lee, without bloodshed, out of the very fortifications against which Burnside, with ram-headed tactics, had driven the sons of the now lamenting mothers of the North. Hooker had done this by a magic all his own. This very minute he was over there in the clearing at Chancellor's, biding his time to give the order: "On to Richmond, boys! the Rebs are on the run!" For they were skeedaddling. They had been seen moving in heavy columns along the Furnace Road, bound south. The cavalrymen over there on the flank were hanging back to cover the retreat. They were of no more account than horseflies. Thus argued the soldiers of the Eleventh Corps, talking mainly in the tongue of the Fatherland, as they smoked their pipes and wondered whether they could get any good lager down in Richmond.

On the hill-top, Chance, jubilant that what he had said should thus prove true even to the boldest coloring

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of his tale, swung sidewise in his saddle and let his eyes have free play up and down the person of his chief. General Jackson measured the sun with his eye; then, bending almost to Little Sorrel's neck, peered through the foliage. What he saw would be hard to tell; what he felt harder still. He saw much more than the scene before him—much more at his mercy than this corps he had come to devour; for in between his eyelids came vivid sights of blue masses in rout far over beyond the present multitude. Eagerness came into his face and a sort of battle splendor. He stood in prophetic witness of the flight and obliteration of the Army of the Potomac. Re-entering the forest, he took stand in the middle of the plank-road, watch in hand, waiting.

It was now five o'clock. Troops were still arriving. Among the cedar clumps, in marshy cripples, under cover of briery stretches, affrighted wild creatures lurked; for to the east lay the strangers who had barred their paths in that direction so long, and now here from the west came other monstrous thousands, silent save for the crackling under their feet or the swish of branches bent aside by them. There was no escape for anything in the net; no, not the smallest loop-hole for buck or doe or bounding wild thing of any kind. They were very tempting to Chance and Will; but the game of battle was so much greater than even lions would have been, that neither of these young hunters whom Eph had trained, nor any rabbit-chaser among Jackson's twenty-five thousand rabbit-chasers there present, fired a shot or hurled a stick. Silence was the word. Hold your bayonets out of the sun! But the sun was declining. The small hand of Jackson's watch pointed straight down, the large one straight up.

"Are you ready, General Rodes?" he said.

"Yes, sir," said Rodes.

"You can go forward, sir."

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There were three lines, two miles long—Rodes, Colston, A. P. Hill. Rodes nodded to Blackford of the skirmishers. A bugle sounded. Other bugles answered. The horse artillery began to move on the plank-road.

In an instant arose strange sounds,—not a roar or thunderous rumble of innumerable feet beating earth, but snapping, tearing, cracking noises, as of a wall of men breaking their way into the open from the depth of the thicket. All the wild creatures hemmed in along the strip fled from the forest and ran in among the Union soldiers, who sprang for their guns.

There was panic from the start. The Federal pickets fired so wildly they cut down a shower of leaves from the tree-tops. Then the oncoming host, breaking out into the fields, delivered its first volley. It was a heavy, rolling, endless volley that tore from left to right, like the passing of a bolt through a great cloud. Hooker heard it at Chancellorsville; and one-armed Howard, who was nearby, at Dowdall's Tavern, read in it the doom of his corps. Very brave were many of Howard's officers and men, and hundreds died heroically; but this onslaught could not be withstood. An egg alone is strongest when struck on end. An army corps so struck rolls up and is done for.

Jackson's ranks commingled and moved onward in mass. It was like a rolling wave, not of water, but of fire, which searched out and destroyed all that lay in its course.

Between the clearing at Dowdall's and the Chancellor clearing was a strip of timber. Through this timber, and on past Hooker's head-quarters, fugitives pushed—singly, in pairs, in squads; some empty-handed, others trailing their guns, but all panic-stricken. "Alles ist verloren. Wo ist der ponton?" There were those who looked backward as they fled; but hundreds dashed through the chinquapin bushes with eyes set, mouths open, tongues

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out. They were utterly now without a sense of what they were doing. Brute fear drove them headlong. It was with them just as it was with the teamsters thundering in clouds of dust down the plank-road. It mattered not that the road was blocked with artillery and jammed with the wreckage of shattered wagons. On and through and over they plunged, and the hullabaloo they raised sounded afar till the wide forest caught it as in a muffle and transformed it into something unlike a human sound. So with the stampeded brutes themselves,—riderless horses, not to be caught by coaxing or lure or main strength; mules strung together in couples, throwing each other when they came to a tree; and cattle which broke away from the camp shambles and ran bellowing upon the heels of men as empty of reason as they.

Suddenly a hero! Major Keenan was playing poker on a cheese-box when the news came of the disaster to the Eleventh Corps. He led the Eighth Pennsylvania Cavalry into the plank-road. By this time the torrent of fugitives had passed, and Jackson was pressing up. Wasn't the whole Union army in peril? Wasn't time—even just a bit of time, five minutes, say—precious beyond estimation? At the masses of gray infantry went Keenan breakneck, dying with the brave men of his squadrons, but striking a blow that stunned.

On account of the Keenans and the slipping down of the sun, Jackson's victory was less complete than he had wished. Darkness fell. There was no moon as yet, and the heavens were blacker by reason of smoke and dust than they would have been ordinarily at this time of the evening. Nevertheless, Jackson refused to stop.

"Men, get into line!" he kept saying. "Push them, Lane, push them!"

He was on the plank-road with his staff and couriers, and rode into the woods fronting his line of battle. Chance and Will spurred ahead of the cavalcade till they

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heard the ring of axes about them. By the thump of the feet of galloping horses and the rumble of wheels they knew that Federal batteries were swinging into position between them and the Chancellor House. They rode back and reported.

"I can hear the chopping myself," said Jackson. "Are you sure about the artillery?"

"Yes, sir," said Chance; "sure."

"I'd swear it," said Will.

"Please, sir," urged Captain Wilbourne, "go back in rear of General Hill's line. They will sweep this woods with fire."

"Oh, yes," pleaded Boswell; "be prudent, sir."

"We'll all go back together," said Jackson.

They wheeled their horses and rode slowly towards the line of battle.

When they were a little way from the front of the Eighteenth North Carolina, a part of that regiment, mistaking them for Union cavalry, let drive in a cutting volley. Jackson, with the survivors of his party, plunged into the woods. Instantly came a second volley from the same regiment. Three bullets struck the general—one his right hand, another his left, a third his arm, which was broken. Little Sorrel, being frantic, dashed among the trees towards the Union lines. Jackson's face was torn by tree branches, and he fell. Later, in the cannon fire, he was thrown from a litter and hurt in the side. He was protected by a rubber-faced overcoat; but because he lay so long on the damp ground pneumonia seized him.

Of his party many fell with him. Wilbourne and Boswell were killed. Fourteen horses cumbered the ground. Among them were Trix and Lady Kit. Chance and Will died together. If either breathed after those two volleys from the rifles of Pender's men no one ever knew it. Possibly they might have survived but for the raking wild fire of shot and shell which now swept the plank-



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road from the guns they had heard getting into place. It was a fit ending of a marvellous day—that outbreak of fire and that blast of death in the woods where Marcia's boys went down. But to the world it was "Stonewall" who fell there,—Great Jackson,—the never-to-be-replaced right arm of the Confederacy.



Chapter XXXII

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AT the foot of Sixth Street in Washington, Farrabee, on crutches, watched the wounded come ashore from the steamboats. The sights he saw caused him to regard his own wound as trifling. He marvelled at the stoicism of the mangled fellows, who were as grateful to him when he gave them cigars as though he had given them back their lost blood. Once, after nearly a thousand of these victims of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville had been landed and borne away in ambulances to the various hospitals, Farrabee swung himself across the Capitol grounds, and resting on the steps fell into an emotional reverie.

Oh, the maimed, the maimed! Was Abolition worth the sacrifice? Was the Union worth it?

He closed his eyes and ran over in his mind those numerous things that make one in love with the world,—white sails on a blue sea; flecks of light in the beechwood; gold on the grass at sunset; still waters at ebb-tide; the lamp and the book on a winter's night; the adorable graces of her who has become one's all-in-all.

"Ah," he thought; "what, indeed, are these to that new beatitude I have just come upon? What is so beautiful as the patience of these lads under the torture of their wounds? Nothing. No, nothing I have ever seen is so pitiful or so sweet."

Thus he sat in the sun on the Capitol steps or lounged about the hotel lobbies, moralizing on what he saw or heard. As soon as he should be released from parole by exchange he would strap himself in the saddle for ser-

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vice. Meanwhile he was organizing a Sanitary Chloroform Brigade. In every heavy battle there had been lack of morphia and chloroform. Mr. Lincoln thought well of the project.

"I'm afraid you'd lose your other leg if you entered the Cabinet," he joked; "we have high old tussles sometimes."

Farrabee boarded with Mr. Coutts. By this time Mr. Coutts's relief map showed nearly a thousand battles, bombardments, cavalry fights, guerilla raids, and outpost collisions. In the West, blue was pushing down—Iuka, Corinth, Island No. 10, Memphis, Stone's River.

"We'll get Vicksburg soon, I reckon," said he to Farrabee; "and that'll mean an open Mississippi from St. Louis to the sea. I'm mixing flame-red to splash that," he laughed.

"Right you are, old fellow," said Farrabee. "You're making a grand old spread-eagle map, anyhow. Why don't you paint in the wickedness of the war up North?"

Mr. Coutts put aside his brush and faced Farrabee.

"Well, now," said he, "I didn't think *you'd* ever admit what you've just owned up to. You're the very last man I'd have picked out as capable of taking note of it. This plan of overawing everybody in sympathy with the South is a terrible thing, Mr. Farrabee."

"I know it," replied Farrabee; "but I want it to be rigorously enforced. I'm in sympathy with it. Says I to the President: 'Let Stanton go ahead. Give him rope.'"

"Mr. Farrabee," said Coutts, impressively, "I used to be a George Washington patriot. Now I'm an Abe Lincoln patriot. But I tell you, sir, I'm appalled. I am, indeed. Why, sir, battles are going on in which there's no sound of gun or sight of blood. Look at our Northern prisons. Chock full of honorable men—preachers, judges, high-toned citizens."

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"Semi-Secesh," interrupted Farrabee; "serves 'em right. I endorse Stanton. He's justified in his high-handedness. It's a revolution."

"It's a time," continued Mr. Coutts, "when fingers meet thumb at the back of the windpipe, and men grow blue in the face and fall off from what has always been theirs and the long possession of their fathers."

"Oh, it's an upheaval—that's what it is," agreed Farrabee. "People are desperate. Every man walks as if he expected to step off into the bottomless pit. No one knows to-day what's going to happen to-morrow. That explains the trickery that's going on here. Thousands are 'on the make,' even the bravest of the brave. They know they're going to be shot, and want to grab enough together to feed their babies."

"Trickery, Mr. Farrabee!" cried Coutts. "Trickery! Now, don't mention that unless you want me to have a fit right here on the spot and spoil my beautiful map."

Farrabee stumped away.

That evening, in the lobby at Willard's, he had proof extraordinary of the trickery abroad. He saw a man with a bushy beard move a hand along the arm of a chair and uncover a copper coin, head up. Whereupon another middle-aged man stepped out of the throng and seated himself in an adjoining chair. Farrabee watched the two. He had heard of the secret signs of the Knights of the Golden Circle, but this public proceeding in the shadow of the Capitol amazed him, and he was still more amazed when the men began to talk of contracts one of them had just closed with the government.

"Sproule!" whispered the bushy-bearded rogue. "Yes, yes; he's in it big. Made a haul on shoes this whack."

"Still in Canada?" asked the other.

"Not so loud," said Bushy Beard. "What a look that fellow with crutches has on his face! Why are you glow-

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at us like that, my friend?" he added, addressing
bee.

rabee arose and swung himself forward till he faced
en.

ecause I saw you juggle that copperhead," said he ;

because I believe you to be vile pelf-hunters—both
u. It's men of your kidney who're forcing the gov-
ent to spend a billion a year to carry on this war.
had my way, I'd cram the old Capitol jail ram-
full of such rascals as you! Or, rather, I'd hang
-you infernal scoundrels!"

rabee left the hotel and hobbled along Pennsylvania
ue towards Little G Street. The theatres were
ng out their throngs. Officers were handing beau-
women, clad in hoops and French silks, into car-
s. From groggeries came sounds of cork-crack
izz and clinking glasses.

Jm!" reflected Farrabee; "they tell me there's been
ad riot in Richmond. The war's starving them, and
ng us. But this business of picking Uncle Sam's
t riles me. If I don't go beard the Choker in his
he first thing to-morrow morning, I wish I may

ter breakfast, Farrabee called upon Mr. Stanton at
Var Department. His card came back marked "Too

" Farrabee changed this into "Not too busy to
a government plunderer," and sent it in again. A

te later Mr. Stanton appeared in the anteroom and
d about him. He was searching out among his

of callers the man who had disputed his ruling.

t, stout, dark-skinned, quick-motioned, with piercing

that looked through square-rimmed spectacles as
gh they might crack the glass, he stood twisting his

beard into a hangman's loop till he saw Farrabee
n arm.

'm the chap, Mr. Secretary," cried Farrabee.

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Stanton's manner changed. His one weakness was for maimed soldiers.

"Pick up your sticks and come into my office," said he.

On the walls of the room into which they passed were many maps mysteriously marked in ink. In an adjoining room sounded a constant "click, click."

"Now, blaze away," said Mr. Stanton. "You look like a man who can hit the mark. I'll give you five minutes."

Farrabee told the tale of the copper and the contractors. Then he began to pour out his wrath. Presently the Secretary tapped on his desk.

"Stop!" said he. "Tell me who you are. I thought you were a soldier,—but you talk like a Ben Butler or a Ben Wade or a Henry Winter Davis, or all three rolled into one. Where did you lose your leg?"

He sat back in his chair watching Farrabee's eyes, which changed as he talked, burning molten amber. Stanton had searched the depths of many kinds of eyes,—slate-colored, steel-blue, green; eyes that were like carbuncles; the angelic, the predatory, the filmy eye,—but in this lambent, glowing iris of the man before him he found something new and fascinating. His five minutes' grace passed into twenty.

"See here, Mr. Farrabee," he interjected, "we must get back to business. I'll fix the rascally contractors you spoke of. As for Sproule, your news about his being in Canada is no news to me. A spy of ours named Le Butt has kept me posted concerning him."

"Le Butt!"

"Yes, Le Butt—the same who procured us Lee's order in the Antietam campaign. Do you know him?"

"By hearsay." His thoughts had flown to Po. Her Rebel lover a scoundrel!

"I'm not sure," continued Mr. Stanton, "that this copperhead, Sproule, didn't have a good deal to do with

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the Republican losses in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. He was operating all the fall through the Knights of the Golden Circle. There was a fellow named——”

He paused, drew his hand across his forehead, gave an angry “Tut, tut!” and tapped a bell. Farrabee now noticed blue-black rings in the Secretary’s eye-sockets and a foam of gray in his beard.

“Dogged to death,” thought Farrabee.

“Fetch me Memorandum M 630,” said Stanton to a clerk. “Of all the scoundrels on earth,” he added, in a piping key, “I’d like to catch those two—Sproule and his cut-throat helper. I’ll give you his name directly. Ah, here it is. McQueal. That’s the rogue—McQueal.”

Farrabee laughed such a laugh that hurried word went forth from the vestibule gossips of the War Office that Hooker must have won a victory on the Rappahannock.

Stanton’s eyes were interrogation points.

Farrabee recounted some of McQueal’s exploits of old.

“Well, the rogue’s recent doings are what concern me,” said the Secretary, looking at the clock. “We caught him once and his death-warrant was read to him in a faro-bank. But he got away. After that the Secret Service men were hunting him for weeks, but failed to find him.”

“Maybe they were in cahoots with him,” said Farrabee, dryly.

Stanton ignored the suggestion.

“I understand,” he continued, “that this McQueal is actually hiding in the army. He enlisted to pull wool over our eyes. We must nab McQueal, and bait a hook to tempt Sproule south of the St. Lawrence.”

“How?” asked Farrabee.

“You spoke of your father’s place, and said young Sproule was there, wounded. Paternal affection is strong. Can’t you lure the father to the dying son?”

“No, sirree!” said Farrabee. “I can’t do that, Mr.

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Secretary. The young fellow's Dad's guest. I ain't much on scruples, but I won't take a hand in this particular game."

Again the great man looked at the clock. He dismissed Farrabee with a handshake. Then he tapped his bell.

"There's a man in Little G Street named Coutts," said he to the attendant; "fetch him to me at once."

After Po had nursed Johnsey through his fever she returned to Washington. Here her duties multiplied. Much was asked of her by many people. Even from distant cities came letters and telegrams entreating her to execute for the senders all sorts of errands of mercy. Now in a hospital, now in a camp of contrabands, now among the weaklings of the corps of convalescents, she was alacrity itself; and the wonder was that what she so nimbly did should be so thoroughly and soothingly done.

But lack of sleep and the tax upon her sympathies cut in upon her store of kindness. Harsh or illogical acts began to rasp her. Did she become entangled in red-tape while seeking to undo a stupid or cruel coil which threatened to strangle some poor soldier or ruin some hapless civilian's name, the situation irritated her; and the habit of argument bore her down towards the habit of impatient and cutting speech. Po knew of this growing weakness, and she knew, too, the risk she was running when night after night she robbed herself of rest. But the camps called her, the pest-houses called her, and there was this very evening an urgent cry for her from Armory Square Hospital.

"Oh, you poor drudge!" said the master of Ward C. "I pity you. You look tired to death now. But I've been hoping you'd come. It's been a hard day, and it's going to be a hard night. New arrivals. Amputation cases most of 'em. And one man is not only horribly

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wounded, but horribly burnt. He was caught in the brush fire that swept the thickets after the battle of Chancellorsville. It's Number 6. I've never seen his like—that's a fact, Miss Groudy. Morphine? Well, you'd be astonished. It doesn't last with Number 6. I'd take him out, if I had a place to put him, even if it is against orders."

"You need rest, sir," said Po. "Don't worry any more about Number 6. I'll look after him. Consider yourself relieved. Good-night."

Ward C was a long gallery with a row of cots, heads to the wall, on either side. Most of the wounded lay with set jaws, seeking to smother complaint; but groans escaped their lips at times. Their eyes were pitiful; and to Po the writhing of such as mastered themselves in their agony was as a speaking message that stirred her soul with compassion. They might as well have groaned aloud, poor fellows! Number 6 would have drowned their complaining with his curses.

"Dear me, dear me!" said one of them to an attendant; "are you sponging vitriol upon my bandage, or is it that coward's bellowing that makes me wish I might die?"

Po knelt by the cot of Number 6 and sought to take the man's hand. He turned upon her as if to crush her. Only his bodily helplessness saved her a blow. But his tongue was free. He cursed her with a ribaldry unthinkable. It was as if he had been a gatherer of venom from all the haunts of human vice in all the land, and this venom he now poured out in blasphemous speech upon the girl at his side.

"Come away, come away!" cried a nurse. "Old Dr. Chloroform's that man's only soother. Let him alone. Let him bawl himself to death."

"If I could only touch his heart just once," said Po. But she realized that she had made matters worse. The ward was in an uproar. Very deep was her distress.

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She moved from cot to cot, but no one gave her a welcome look. She tried the magic of her hand upon the forehead of a boy who but yesterday had fondled it and sheepishly kissed it, dying for love as he was. Now he shrank from her touch. It was this rebuff that broke Po's heart. The moral pith went out of her. Hope took wing, faith, her very spirit as it seemed; and she passed down the aisle a beaten coward. Her sole wish was that she might get out of the foul air without falling. She put her hands over her ears to shut out the fearful sounds. This but deadened them the merest trifle, the ravings of Number 6 pierced her to her marrow and shook her as she had never before been shaken by cry or groan or shriek or madman's roar.

Po ran out into the night air, her hands still at her ears. Thus, in her nurse's garb, she hurried along the street with no aim other than that of putting far behind her the harrowing place.

"Oh, his curses, his curses!" she whispered.

Then she stopped.

"He is mad!" said she. "And I? Oh, I shall go mad. What if I should," she muttered, "and become a wicked thing? Oh, his curses, his curses! Something draws me to repeat them. It might be so. It might be so. A wicked, wicked thing!"

She saw a public 'bus lumbering along towards the Capitol. She hailed it and entered. How glad she was to be among people who talked in coherence and quietly. Some of them were laughing. That was good. Laughter has saved the world. By the dim light the passengers eyed her with curiosity. One of them came and sat beside her.

"Good-evening, sister," said he. "You don't remember me, do you? I belong to G Street Methodist. We were praying for you at our meeting to-night. Brother Grouch made a powerful prayer. He took us right

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onto the battlefield, and he said 'God bless Po Groudy!' See here! What's the matter?"

She had put up her hands to arrange her hair, but involuntarily had clapped them to her ears.

He looked at her keenly. Then sympathy came into his eyes.

"Are you not well, sister? How white you are! Bless me! Maybe you're working too hard? Maybe some affliction has come?"

"Oh, brother!" said Po; "I had to come away from Armory Hospital. I'm ashamed to tell you so, or for any one to know it. You see, I'm weak and proud. God is humbling me for my pride."

"Your pride is pride in well-doing," said he; "who hasn't that, I'd like to know?"

Then once more he looked at her searchingly.

"Why do you keep putting your hands to your ears? You're nigh distracted."

"It is so," she said. "I wish I could go to some quiet place for awhile."

"Come with me," said he. He stopped the 'bus in the Capitol grounds. "I'm night watchman here," he explained.

Po followed him into the great building, up many flights of stairs, along many corridors. Finally they emerged upon a broad expanse of roof—the sky above, scarce a sound from the city below.

"This is what I call my 'Solitude,'" said the watchman. "On summer nights I often sit here. No one comes. It is not an unholy place, sister. Prayers have gone up from here. Look. Look over yonder on the Virginia hills. And this way towards the Maryland hills. Is that not worth praying for? Are they not worth working for as you have worked?"

Po found immediate pleasure in the sight. As far as she could see stretched the camp-fires—thousands upon

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thousands of them engirding the Capital. She turned to thank the watchman for what he had done for her. He was gone. She seated herself upon a little bench and gazed upon the picture.

Then with wonder and awe she looked upon the heavens. As the camp-fires were below, so were the stars above. Po's mind became increasingly refreshed, even as was her body by the cool breeze from beyond the river. The petty and the horrible alike passed out from that recess of her being they had seized upon and gorged. Calm fell upon the girl.

Each star a sun or a world. She had heard that, and it must be true. How could it be otherwise? Each of the million worlds an abiding-place for a million million of God's children. This was the starting-point of Po's sweetening thought as she sat alone on the roof of the Capitol. And Christ? Would He, then, have done that for this world which He had not done for all those other worlds up there? And how many Calvarys must there be in the great vault?

So Po sat, and so Po found physic in her reverie. She sought her knees. Bats circled about her and night-hawks zooned around the unfinished dome; but she was not afraid of them. She was fearful of nothing now. Even Number 6 was not to be feared. She prayed for him; and, as was her custom every night upon disrobing, she prayed for Pasque Le Butt. But most of all she thought of the vast and inexpressibly holy work Christ must have done among those several worlds aloft. With hands clasped, face uplifted, she strained her eyes to see beyond the stars. By and by the bats swept the stars out with their wings. She slept.

"It's half-past two in the morning," said the watchman. "I didn't mean to wake you, but this copper sheeting thunders underfoot when a man walks it. How do you feel now, sister?"

NUMBER 6

"Oh, so much better," said Po, thanking him as she descended. "All my fatigue is gone. I'm entirely myself now. But I must hurry back to Armory Square."

"Not to-night," protested the watchman.

"Yes, I must."

She found a cab at the edge of the Capitol grounds, and drove to her lodgings. She laved and refreshed herself, and put on a clean white frock, and hurried to the hospital.

As the ward-master had foreseen, it had been a "hard night" in Ward C. Number 6 was wicked with a wickedness unheard of; and Number 6 was dying the death of the damned. He had ceased to scourge the other inmates about a half-hour before the turn of the night, but now he was cursing again.

Suddenly, in at the doorway came Po, with slow step, head exalted, eyes aloft, arms outspread; all in white, grace and sweetness beyond measure radiating from her. She sang from the very threshold—low at first, very low, very softly. Finally her voice filled the room—sweet, insistent, soothing. Something had whispered to her to sing, and she sang.

Perhaps the wounded men thought they had passed the gate, so great was the change,—for Number 6 had ceased to curse. He watched Po as she knelt at the side of his cot.

"Come here," said he. "You don't know me, do you? But I know'd you as soon as ye 'gin to sing. You're Jett's gal, ain't ye?"

"Yes," said Po; "my grandfather was Captain Jett."

"Him as passed fer sich," said Number 6. "Kin ye fotch to mind a feller named McQueal?"

"Oh, yes," said Po.

"That's me!" said Number 6. "I'm the beggar that stold yer nigger gal from you twict. What's more, I stold you."

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"Stole me!" exclaimed Po.



"Yes,—you! You warn't Jett's gran'darter no more'n I was. Old Piety was a humbug. It was a cheat all through. Sproule got me to pull you off from his brother-in-law's, so's you couldn't come in fer the old doctor's coin."

Po looked at the dying man in amazement.

"Then, who am I?" said she. But there was no answer. Number 6 was at last the stillest man in Ward C.

When Po told Farrabee of what had happened, he said little about McQueal and Sproule, but a great deal about the trial she had undergone.

"You're played out," said he; "that's what's the matter. You'll go queer at the core by and by with too much praying for the souls of dead men. Now, see here. Old Bob Lee has started North. Hooker's after him. They'll run into each other, sure pop. I'm going to start my chloroform wagons for Frederick right away. Go get Jule and your things and we'll join the procession. There's enough hospital poison in you to fit out a rattlesnake, but I'll rid you of it in a week. Pack your satchels, Po Groudy. We'll take in the Bee Farm, and then overhaul the Army of the Potomac."

Chapter XXXIII

AT THE BEE FARM

IT was now the very prime and pink of the year. Rain and sunshine each in season had done its magic work and the Maryland border counties and those of Pennsylvania's southern tier were in their richest garb of green. Here were fields of uncut wheat; there others with the grain in shock. Trees were red with cherries, birds in sweetest voice, the mountains asleep in their cloaks of blue. It was a time to lie by in the shade and stretch the limbs and feel winey joy in the blood. But sweet and soft as the air was, and fervid fine for ripening, it was filled with the threat of death. Lee was about to invade the North.

First to break over the border was a cloud of contrabands. They ceased to sing, "Hit mus' be dat de Kingdom's er-comin' in the yeah of Jubilee," and passed along the Cumberland Valley roads, spreading panic-news to the base of the Tuscarora Mountains. Then came runaway teamsters telling a thousand tales to frighten the folks of the countryside. Next passed North in order many squadrons of Confederate cavalry. Following were guerillas and border outlaws. All these were but avant-couriers of the approaching host.

For a week the Bee Farm was overrun with the fugitives and their followers. But between the time of the first rush of invasion and the coming up of the Confederate infantry there was a brief period of calm. In this space much happened.

Johnsey, who felt himself strong enough to rejoin the Army of the Potomac, overcame his mother's fond demur,

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put on his uniform, and rode away. Marcia prepared to return to Oaks of Saul. But, while she and Eph were still at the Bee Farm, Po and Farrabee arrived. That same day came another visitor—Chockley Sproule.

With Chockley in his York gig was an English valet. Master and man had a foreign air. Chockley greeted Eph and passed into the house.

"Oh, Chockley, Chockley!" cried Marcia, in tears at the first sight of him. "Don't blame me about Chance and Will. You will kill me if you do. I blame myself, but you must not feel hard towards me."

Chockley spoke with as much tenderness as one of his nature could muster. He embraced his wife and smoothed back her hair at the temples, and said: "Chut, chut, my dear; don't take on. I knew how you would feel, Marcia, and had to come, danger or no danger. I thought of the sea route, but they've been sinking Cape Fear boats lately; so I made up my mind to try it overland. Of course I'm sorry I've missed seeing Johnsey; but it made me feel good all over just now when Eph told me our dear son was well enough to ride a horse again. Why did you write me he was dying, and wanted to see me about the farms?"

Marcia, sweetened at heart by her husband's kindness, looked upon him in a dazed way.

"I?" said she. "I? Why, Chockley, I did not write to you to come."

"What!" said he; "you did not mail me this pleading letter to come here with all haste? It reached me by the same mail that brought a letter from Coutts enclosing a pass through the lines at Winchester. If you didn't write the letter, Marcia, then I'd like to know who did? Can it be that some enemy of mine has set a trap for me?"

"Oh, no," said Marcia. "It can't be. No one would be so vile as that."

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Chockley stepped to the window and looked out. On the lawn he saw Farrabee, who was gazing down the road which led up from Antietam Valley. With him was Eph, pointing excitedly towards an approaching carriage. Po and Jule were pitting cherries on the porch-step. Chockley did not recognize them. He went out on the porch. Marcia followed him.

"There's something strange about this," said he. "It seems to me there's treachery in it. Marcia, isn't that Dr. Eubanks getting out of the carriage? Eph is shaking hands with him. It is! As sure as I'm alive, it's Brother John! Maybe *he* wrote the letter, Marcia, and signed your name to it. Suppose he heard Johnsey was at death's door—it would have been no great liberty to take."

"No," said Marcia. "Johnsey sent him word by Rhetta a week ago that I would be ready in a little while to return to Virginia. Brother John wouldn't have written such a letter. You don't know him, Chockley; you never did understand him. But who is the old gentleman with my brother? Po Groudy must know the old man. Just see how she hugs him."

"Po Groudy!" exclaimed Sproule. Then, under his breath: "She! Is that girl here? And that fellow on crutches,—he's old Farrabee's Abolition son; a lunatic with a particular grudge against me. Aha! They've set a trap for me—these Farrabees."

It was Parson Bowling who had come with Dr. Eubanks and who was causing a stir among those who had gathered by the carriage. He had become famous as the Chaplain of Libby, had talked "Jack Bowling" for months, had found a clue to the tragedy of the Juniper Water Man; had visited the Great Dismal and Jerusalem Court-house, and then had sought Dr. Eubanks at Oaks of Saul. Together they had hurried North. In telling them of McQueal's confession, Po glanced towards the porch. She did not mention Chockley Sproule; but

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Farrabee knew the story. It puzzled the English valet, sitting stolidly in Chockley's gig, to see old Gray Hairs and the handsome girl go out on the lawn together and kneel as if plucking stars-of-Bethlehem. Doubtless it was a custom of the country.

While Po Bowling and her grandfather were still in the act of prayer, Farrabee set the ferrules of his crutches upon the porch-steps with a vengeful thump and faced Chockley Sproule.

Chockley was first to speak. "Ah!" said he, with a Dundreary drawl; "you are the younger Mr. Farrabee. Tell me, sir, did you not write me a letter last week to come to this house to bid farewell to my dying son?"

Farrabee's eyes shot out liquid darts.

"Not much I didn't," he said. "I'm not that sort of galoot. In fact, I'd like to respect Dad's hospitality, but I guess I can't hold in. I've got to have it out with you right here and now. Madam," he added, with a courteous pleading glance towards Marcia, "won't you permit me to speak alone with your husband?"

"Yes, Marcia," said Dr. Eubanks, who had drawn near, with the others, "let us go indoors."

"No," said Marcia. "I will remain with my husband. Say what you have to say. He is mine; I am his."

Marcia was sitting with closed eyes, her head resting against the back of her chair. Her hands were shaking, and she was struggling to keep them still. She seemed a very old woman now, and it hurt her brother to his heart and it hurt her husband and it hurt Farrabee to see her so. Pain showed in Po's eyes, too; and she knelt by Marcia's chair and fondled her hand.

She looked at Farrabee appealingly.

"All I can find it in me to say," said he, "is this: Many years ago a great wrong was done. But now the wrong is a righted thing. For the most part I wag a fool's tongue, and often there's venom on it. I'm going

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to be foolish now, but not venomous. I'll just ask Eph here if he believes in a watchful God."

Eph swung back his shoulders and gave Farrabee such a look that Po was thrilled by it.

"I do dat, suh!" he exclaimed; "I believe in Almighty God!"

"Amen!" spoke up Parson Bowling.

"Sometimes," continued Farrabee, "we poor sinners are torn with doubt. We marvel at a wrong done. We cry out against the Most High. Then we see what good comes out of that wrong. Is it not so, Eph?"

All this time Chockley sat with composed face. But his mind was acutely at work. Who had done this? McQueal must have talked with these people. It served him right for renewing relations with the treacherous scamp. However, so long as Farrabee should restrict himself to vapping, no harm would be done. Let him but mention McQueal! And what then? Wouldn't it be easy to impeach the testimony of such a scoundrel? He would simply say that McQueal had lied. And he would say it with a drawl. And Marcia would believe him. Chockley did not perceive that Marcia had divined the truth. He felt ashamed that Eubanks should have heard Farrabee, for Eubanks would comprehend; nevertheless, Chockley did not show his shame. He watched Farrabee and waited. Furthermore, he kept an eye upon the gate and the road beyond.

Along this road, as Farrabee ceased to speak, came a patrol of Union cavalry. The officer of the patrol entered the gateway and strode across the lawn. He was stout and red-faced and his eyes were much sharper than his manner.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I hope you will pardon me for breaking in upon you in this abrupt way. I have come from the Provost Marshal at Harper's Ferry to arrest Mr. Chockley Sproule. Unless I'm very

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much mistaken," he added, turning upon Chockley, "you're the man I'm after."

"I utterly fail to understand," said Chockley, rising, "why I should be placed under arrest. Let me ask, my dear man, what warrant you have in this matter?"

"Well, now," said the officer, "it's no use to get high and mighty about it. Here's the order. It comes from Mr. Stanton and the President. I'm afraid, sir, you'll have to spend the rest of the summer in the Old Capitol, or Fort Delaware."

"Be seated, captain," said Sproule. "The President has no authority to arrest me. I'm not a citizen of the United States."

The captain laughed.

"That's a good one," he said. "Why, Mr. Sproule, we know that. You're a Reb, of course—Secesh; but that's not our fault."

"You're mistaken again, my dear man," persisted Chockley. "I see now how the trouble has arisen. You are laboring under a capital error. I am not, nor ever have been, a citizen of the Southern Confederacy. No, sir! I was once a citizen of the United States, but now I am a subject of Her Majesty the Queen of England. My papers? Ah, yes. Fortunately, I have my papers with me. Here, I think, is a letter from Lord Lyons, too. Yes, here it is—his lordship's congratulatory letter. I had supposed his lordship had made it known in Washington that I was a subject of the Queen."

The officer of the cavalry patrol fingered his belt.

"You surprise me," said he; "if I had known——"

"My dear fellow," said Sproule, caressing his beard, "you're excusable—perfectly excusable. There's no harm done. Not the least."

The officer hesitated.

Chockley smiled.

"I'll tell you," he continued; "if you feel it your

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bounden duty to execute the order, I'll go with you, of course. But, as you see yourself, it's a grave matter—an exceedingly grave matter. Very little is needed just now to precipitate trouble between Her Majesty's government and the United States. Being a sensible man, you will not argue that point. All things considered——”

“All things considered,” interrupted the captain, “I'll bid you good-day, sir; and you, ladies and gentlemen, I again ask your pardon and bid you good-day.”

For many minutes Dr. Eubanks paced up and down the lawn, his chin in his cravat. By and by he walked with Eph to the apiary, and together they viewed the beehives.

“Eph,” exclaimed the doctor, suddenly, “you're the only human being I'd say so to,—my brother, Chockley Sproule, is a low scoundrel.”

“Howsum low he am,” replied Eph, stooping and touching the dirt with his left hand; “howsum high's Mis' Mahsy Sproule.” And, rising to his greatest height, he stood on tiptoe and lifted his right hand to the full of his reach.

“You understand me in part, Eph,” continued Dr. Eubanks, “but you do not follow me to the end. A man who would do as he did in respect to our Po is fit for post or pillory. Yet what of a man born in a land like this,”—he motioned towards the blue mountains, beyond the sunny valley,—“what of a man so born who gives up his citizenship through cowardice! A subject of the Queen! A subject of the Queen!”

Scorn was in the mien as well as in the voice of the old man. To him Chockley Sproule had reached the bottom, indeed.





PART VI
HIGH-TIDE





Chapter XXXIV

THE INVASION

ABOUT this time there was a thunderclap in Franklin Street, Richmond. Pasque Le Butt was under arrest.

Ever since the Maryland campaign there had been whisperings in the Army of Northern Virginia. Who had stolen Special Orders No. 191? There must be a traitor among the trusted officers. Was it A? Was it B? Was it X? It could not be A, because, though A was so and so, he likewise was this and that. General Lee declared that he would suspect no one till proof should come. At last proof came through an exchanged Confederate colonel, with whom Farrabee had talked in Washington. Having heard Stanton speak of Le Butt as a spy, Farrabee had determined that the best way to save Po from falling into the hands of a double-dealer was to have the double-dealer hanged by his own people. Incidentally, he would be doing himself a good turn.

Peter John, going to the Spottswood to gather news about the invasion of Pennsylvania, got an inkling of the discovery. It was the lobby topic of the evening. Had the traitor's name been disclosed? Not yet. Had he been arrested? No one at the hotel knew. Peter John slipped away like an eel in the tuckahoes. He would hurry to his master's stable, hitch a horse to a buggy, speed him that night to Haxall's, and escape North by steamer. But Sacristy Jane! Would she go with him? She *must*. If she refused he would choke her to death, thrust her body in a bag, and sink it in the James. No other man should have her.

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In the hall of the Franklin Street house he met Colonel Le Butt, his riding-breeches on, booted, spurred.

"Where have you been, boy?" said the colonel. "Put on your gray! Get out our horses."

Elizabeth beckoned Peter John into the parlor.

"Your young master is in trouble," said she. "The colonel is going to General Lee's army. You are to accompany him."

There was something claw-like in the grip of Elizabeth's fingers on Peter John's sleeve. The room was dark except for street lights which played upon his face.

"Peter John," said she, "this is your doing."

"No, Mis' Lizzie," he protested. "I've never done anything to hurt young master. I'll go with Colonel Le Butt and stand by him—'deed I will. Wait and see, Mis' Lizzie."

Then suddenly his tone changed from a whine into a hurried whisper. "I know enough about your husband and your brother," said he, "to ruin them, but I've never said a word, nor ever will. You see how faithful I am, Mis' Lizzie."

"You're a scamp," said his mistress.

"No; it'll all turn out right. I love you all better than a dog."

"And like a dog you show your teeth," she said, as she stepped into the hall, where she addressed Colonel Le Butt.

"This son of yours, sir," she said, speaking in passion, "is so treacherous a creature, so bold a liar, so villainous in every way that I fear he will murder you before your journey is ended. But take him along. Watch him. Shoot him if he swerves a hair. You know my belief in this matter, sir."

Colonel Le Butt ignored his wife's insult.

"Elizabeth," said he, speaking slowly and with dignity, though not without thickness of tongue, "Peter John will

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go where I go. He will do what I tell him to do. He will not get away from me, though I can see by the shine in his eyes he expects to. If it is possible to clear away this dishonor, and, under heaven, I believe it is, it shall be done. But, Elizabeth, oblige me by suspending judgment. Give me your confidence. Give me——”

He checked himself, stepped forward, embraced her. And this was done with so much dignity, fervor, love, that Elizabeth softened. She saw now only her long-time husband.

“Do you mean,” she said, “that you feel this undertaking to be beset with dangers other than those arising from the fact that you are to be accompanied by this cunning scamp?”

“Clear skies or death, my dear,” drawled the old man; “farewell.”

As for Pasque, he had been given a bludgeon stroke. The accusation stunned him. Or rather it set astart within him such monstrous rage that the beating of dragon wings in his own soul stunned him. In the first upheavings of his wrath he felt strong enough to defy and defeat and throttle; but soon this anger burnt itself out, and, in the burning, the spirit of the man was for the most part consumed. The body-ache, the chill in the blood, the strange numbness at his temples—these were but after-ashes of the first swift flame that had swept him. He did not sleep for many nights; but sat with his head in his hands moodily thinking it would be well to shoot or drown himself. In his distemper he saw himself, stripped of his uniform, walk through the downpouring rain, and thus pass into the flood of the Potomac, which took his body up, and whirled it along, and beat it against the roots and pebbles, and bestowed it finally in a deep frog-bottom where eels laced themselves in and out through his eye-sockets. Very passionate was Pasque with himself, and very foolish; and he sighed to be a for-

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gotten thing underground; but he could not kill himself, since so to do would be craven; and, even in the de-thronement of his pride, Pasque was proud.

Gradually his despair lessened. His arrest had been made with a light hand. He was not sent to the nearest garrison town, as military custom dictated, but was merely asked to give over his sword to the keeping of the regimental adjutant and to relinquish his duties. He was flattered to discover that he had so many friends. The officers of Ewell's corps were studiously kind. When the court-martial would be held no one could say. The army was moving rapidly and a thousand things were to be done. Blunt Jubal Early swore about the case. Courts-martial were a nuisance at such a time. He questioned Pasque.

"You say you know this Yankee, Farrabee; could he have had a motive in injuring you?"

"A black motive, sir." Pasque's look lent emphasis to his words.

"Then, we're already secure of splendid ground for defence. By extraordinary favor I've obtained from General Lee an order releasing you temporarily from arrest. Therefore, dismiss your trouble. Don't think of your own crisis, but of the crisis of the Confederacy. Ours is a veteran army, proud of itself, its leader, its cause; but it must now put forth its full strength. We're about to make an appeal to Europe. We must strike a blow that will offset Yankee successes elsewhere in the wide theatre of action. Damnation, man, we're going to disembowel the Union!"

So, with the zouaves and the chasseurs-à-pied, Pasque followed the Pelican standard in its adventuresome progress under hostile skies. And, truly, they were alluring skies. Breaking away from Ewell's corps in Cumberland Valley, Pasque's column climbed South Mountain, and from its summit gazed towards the Susquehanna.

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Instinctively, Pasque recognized the arena of coming manœuvres, combat, death, and felt a soldierly heart-swelling. No expanse of earth could be more beautiful. Below, there spread out a very Canaan, walled west and north by heights, and undulating eastward in ever-lessening low ridges as far as the eye could carry. Certainly, a thousand farms were in sight. There they lay in one far-stretching landscape—grain-field, green field, orchard clump, and forest patch in interminable succession. Pasque's soldier eyes came back to him, and from this time on they mirrored much. They mirrored tree-covered round-tops, stretches of red roadway, cedar-bordered lanes, old stone-walled farmsteads, footprints and far horizons, mountain blues and hillside greens; and, above all, they mirrored seas of billowy wheat, heavy-headed under a fervent midsummer sun. Then into them came the image of a close-built court and market-town of red-brick houses, well-shaded and sheltering three thousand people. This was the old carriage-building town of Gettysburg. Screened by ridges, backed by hills, pocketed in a shallow valley—it was soon lost to Pasque, who kept on and on till one night he found himself splashing chest-deep in the Susquehanna. Some comrades close at hand were talking of the great cities beyond the far bank, and boasting of the conquests soon to be made; but, somehow, dejection seized Pasque, and especially love-dejection. For had not Farrabee poisoned Po's heart against him? Might not she by this time be Farrabee's wife, indeed? Under the moon the river was as of silver. Why not make a bed of this beautiful water, and sleep with the fishes? But, no! Old Jubal was right. With battle might come a more welcome death; with victory, vindication. Let either hap befall—only, the sooner the better.

However, the armies were slow to clash. They were more like great birds than anything else—not sky-loving birds, free on the wing, but raptorial, secretive, weighted

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to earth by their monstrous loads of brass and iron and that infernal fire out of which fire would come and wound-horrors and death, and last of all the hidden pyx, like the pyx of the host, holding the fate of government in the Western world.

On the thirtieth of June the wings of each spread thirty miles,—Meade, who had succeeded Hooker, feeling his way due north; Lee executing a volte-face and concentrating with his back to the South Mountains. A bird such as Lee's needed long-range vision; but, in Stuart's absence, its eyes were gone. Stuart was in the worst predicament of his life,—for the Army of the Potomac had thrust itself up between him and the gray infantry and was shouldering him lightly off, so that neither by the use of his six thousand sabres nor by the spurring of his jaded horses could he open a road to his mystified chief, grieving in this crisis at the misadventure of his superb vedette.

But Pasque knew nothing of these larger matters, and wondered exceedingly when orders came to countermarch. Again turnpike dust covered his Louisianians. They slept, awoke, continued the countermarch. The morning was sultry. Mist hid the hills. Something that sounded like thunder rolled up from the south. But it was not thunder-rumble,—it was a cannonade, rising fresher and fresher, roar on roar. Couriers appeared. They leaped their horses over fences, and ran them hither and yon. Heads of column swung south. Steps quickened. Vivified now, and with not a limp in its twice ten thousand legs, the powerful corps swept down on Gettysburg.



Chapter XXXV

HOW A GOD ON A CLOUD CRAWLED UNDER A WOOD-PILE

SHOES! shoes! Not grand design on the part of Lee,—who was riding this forenoon with Lieutenant-General Hill at the base of the mountains,—but an ignoble itch for shoes brought prodigious battle down upon Gettysburg. Shoes mean much to marching men. A barefoot gray brigade of Ewell's corps captured a body of newly-shod Home Guards, unclogged them, struggled in roaring fun to sort the prizes, and laughed from the bottoms of their lungs as the paroled tenderfeet filed off along the stony pike, stepping gingerly, grimacing, caressing their soles. Heth, of Hill's corps, also wanted shoes. He sent to Gettysburg for them. His raiders spied Buford's Union cavalry and drew back. Advancing in force, Heth struck Buford on the second ridge west of Gettysburg; and struck him so hard that the welkin rang. This was the roar that Pasque heard. Great chums had they been at West Point, Heth and Buford, and each had parted the other's hair behind; but now beautiful Willoughby Valley lay between them.

For two hours Buford fought his battle, watch in hand.

"We were born into the world to hold this ridge," said he.

One might have thought his neck in peril of dislocation, for his field-glasses pointed first east, then west. What he dreaded when he looked west was lest he should see a gray wave rolling down the far slope; what he hoped

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for in the east he now thrilled to behold—a signal from the belfry of the Lutheran Seminary: “The corps flag of Reynolds is in sight on Emmitsburg Road!”

Buford himself went into the belfry. Sure enough, yonder was Reynolds, with his galloping escort, already at the edge of the town. A mile beyond were the banners and bayonets of the First Corps.

“Good-morning, John Buford,” said Reynolds, from the head of the belfry stairs; “what’s the matter here?”

“The devil’s to pay,” said Buford. “Take a look for yourself.”

Reynolds viewed the field with his glasses. Slender, five-feet-ten, bearded, moustached, white-skinned where no sunburn showed, hazel-eyed, pleasant-voiced, deliberate in judgment, quick as a hawk in action, the commander of the left wing stood in the belvedere a masterful figure.

“They don’t seem very friendly over there, do they?” said he. “Let’s ride out and see about it.”

On the field he asked:

“Can you hold them a while longer?”

“I reckon,” said Buford.

“We’ll catch them as you drop them. Sproule!” he shouted as he wheeled his horse. “Where’s Sproule?”

“Here, general,” said Johnsey, from among the aids. He was very haggard. Wound-sickness had left him white. On quitting the Bee Farm, he had fallen in with Reynolds and, in the emergency, joined him.

“A word in your ear, as we ride back,” said Reynolds. They were speeding, side by side, down-hill towards Gettysburg. “I want you to start at once for Taneytown. It is of importance that General Meade should grasp the lay of the land. You must inform him for me. And convey this further message: Tell him the enemy are advancing in strong force, and I fear they’ll get to those heights beyond Gettysburg before I can secure them.

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But I'll fight them inch by inch, and hold them off as long as possible. Don't spare horseflesh!" he cried, as at the forking of the ways Johnsey took the Taneytown Road for a twelve-mile run to head-quarters.

Reynolds, for his part, lost no time. In one sense he gained it. Aware that he had just ridden a long mile into town as on one arm of an "A," and a long mile out on the other, he bethought him of the need of a connecting road. So, coming hot-hoof among his troops, he sent forward his pioneers, who, quick to splinter a fence or knock headlong out of their way whatsoever might cumber it, swung their axes on the run till they had cleared a course straight across fields, down-hill and up-hill, to Buford's rear.

As it happened, Mr. Coutts, who had come up from Washington, partly to avoid a possible meeting with Chockley Sproule, against whom he had plotted with Mr. Stanton, and partly to paint a battle in all its dirt and blood, saw the first rush of troops along the bar of the "A." A few of the men made fun of him because he had his sun-umbrella up, but most of them were excited by the battle haste and passed headlong forward. Thrusting his umbrella under a heap of rails, Mr. Coutts joined in the foot-race for Seminary Ridge.

The infantry was just in time. There was an instant volley, solid in sound and as clean as a sheet of flame blown out of a furnace. At once came an answering volley from Heth's Mississippians. It was a stand-off fight in the grain- and grass-fields, with men dropping faster than the eye could fly from one to the other.

Mr. Coutts stood hesitating in Cashtown Road. Should he creep closer, or stay where he was, or should he run? You can't paint noise; why go towards the volleying? To get out of the way of a battery passing to the front, he ran into the Seminary; and was soon in the belfry, where stood a signal-sergeant alone.

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"What the devil are you shennanegan around here for?" said the sergeant, with a contemptuous glance.

"Your face is bleeding, sir," said Coutts.

"A cursed shell cracked in our eyes and laid everybody out but me. Take my glasses, and keep watch while I go dip my head in a bucket of water."

It now seemed to Mr. Coutts that he was alone with the battle. Like a god on a cloud, the panorama was his.

At his back was the town; far off, on either hand, were masses of cavalry, guidons up; in his front there rolled broadly away ten miles to the mountains an immense map with innumerable markings. Mr. Coutts's scenic sense was quick. A snap or two of his eyes, and then: "I have it!" said he; "the ridges run south, the creeks run south, and I expect I'll be running south myself directly."

Vast numbers of the enemy were approaching. Nearer were wagons and batteries taking order in the fields. Nearer still! Mr. Coutts puckered his lips in an ejaculatory whistle.

"Lord have mercy!" he cried. "The Rebs are gaining ground!"

"What's that?" said the sergeant, reappearing; "our fellows on the skeedaddle already?"

"No, by ginger, no," protested Coutts. "They're at it hot, only they're inching back as the Rebs inch up." He viewed the scene many minutes, fascinated, sweat running down his temples.

The sergeant drew out a pocket-mirror and examined his hurts.

"Keep me posted, old man," he commanded.

"Well, well!" cried Mr. Coutts; "that beats anything I ever saw! Just now a thousand men sank into the earth!"

"Rebs?"

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"Johnny Rebs! I saw their red flag go down."

The sergeant wigwagged from a window.

"They've sneaked into old Thad Stevens's tapeworm," he explained; "it's a deep cut, dug for a railroad, and runs into town. What else do you see?"

"Our boys are extending their line. They're moving forward. They're peppering the Rebs in the flank. Look at the commotion! The Johnnies are getting the worst of the tussle, sir,—they're dusting! And, by the Lord Harry——"

Mr. Coutts whooped. At the same moment cheers came jubilantly in from the field.

"So they nabbed the Rebs in the cut, did they?" said the sergeant. "I wonder what luck we're having on the left? Watch that patch of woods where Reynolds is. If you've got anything in your hip-pocket, old man, we'll drink to his success."

"I've heard him called the most gallant gentleman in the army," said Mr. Coutts, as he drew forth his flask; "I'll gladly pledge him."

The most gallant gentleman in the army at this moment lay quivering on the ground. He had snared Heth's Tennesseans in a tongue of woods. But, at the very instant of preliminary victory, a sharpshooter's bullet, coming down from a tree-top, made a tiny round hole in the back of his neck.

There was a lull. Orchard-birds ventured home from the ravines. The sweat-drops on Mr. Coutts's forehead evaporated to the fanning of a southerly breeze which smelt of hay, despite the pungent smack of burnt gun-powder in the air. The same breeze lifted the smoke from where the dead lay in zigzag course for a thousand yards or more.

Heth was realigning. Pender's nineteen regiments of Carolinians and Georgians were coming up. On the Union side, the last of the First Corps was on the field.

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"There comes the Eleventh," said the sergeant. "Howard's in command now."

Mr. Coutts gazed a long while at the columns pressing into Gettysburg. On the sidewalks stood hundreds of townspeople, ladling water from tubs or handing pies to the troops. One division held back on Cemetery Hill; the others kept on and formed in the valley, gently hollowing at the town's edge as does the palm of the hand.

"When our line's complete," remarked Mr. Coutts, "it will show a great big blue V, pointing north."

"You're getting to be some pumpkins on the military, old man," laughed the sergeant. But, glancing northeast, he gave a cry; then seized his flag and waved it frantically towards Cemetery Hill.

"You're spelling damnation in the air," said Mr. Coutts. "What's happened?"

Disgust sat upon the sergeant's face. He pointed towards Ewell's corps, approaching in such a way as to clamp and crush the Union troops.

Grander battle at once came on. Rodes began it for Ewell. Stealing down from the north along the hidden slope of Oak Ridge, he tried to break in the point of the V with metal from massed cannon firing as at a common target. Then he made an Olympian throw of four of his five brigades,—his Georgians along the townward side of the ridge; his Alabamians straight along the crest; his North Carolinians faster and farther along the western slope in such a way that one brigade came out from behind the other, lapping the First Corps front for half a mile. Each brigade, like a jumping spider, spun a connecting thread, and at three o'clock Ewell touched hands with A. P. Hill. Coincidentally with the movement rose a battle-roar. Union troops, rushing to the point of the V, defended it against Rodes. First they beat off the Alabamians. Then, facing west, in a ferocity born of battle

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zeal, they tore to pieces a North Carolina brigade, capturing standards and a thousand prisoners.

"Bully boys!" said the sergeant. "I never saw the like of it."

In his excitement Mr. Coutts ran down to see the prisoners.

"Here, Uncle," shouted a stretcher-bearer, "lend a hand. My mate's been shot."

Mr. Coutts took hold and trotted at the heels of the litter-bearer straight towards the line of battle. Tiny spits of dirt flew up very near him. Explosive grasshoppers jumped high and hard out of the grass and lit at his feet—"zzz-t! zzz-t!" Finally one of the grasshoppers struck the litter-bearer in the temple and hid inside, leaving a purple-rimmed hole. Mr. Coutts dropped his end of the litter, dodged under a brier-hedge, and crept along it till he came to a fence behind which lay a long line of men in blue.

"Get out of that!" cried an officer. "Can't you see what's coming?"

Mr. Coutts looked across the field. There they were—masses of the enemy double-quicking towards the fence and all after *him*! They were looking straight at *him*; they were objurgating *him*; they were shooting at *him*. Robert Lee had sent a whole wave of men to roll over *him*.

He clung to a fence-post and shut his eyes. When he opened them the wave had receded. Dead and dying were around him. Through the smoke loomed up the belfry tower. He reascended and surveyed the field, sweeping the semicircular two-mile line of fire. Seventy gray regiments were closing in on fifty blue. Steadily and swiftly pressed on the far-extended lines of gray infantry. The ranks approaching the tenacious and terrible First Corps line suffered most. Arms were in the air; legs, heads, shredded flesh flew visibly. It was the pitch and

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acme of heroism in onslaught and defence, with ten thousand already down.

Mr. Coutts was horrified. He fled from the belfry and tried to return to Emmitsburg Road the way he had come, but was swept into Gettysburg by the drift and push of First Corps survivors passing towards Cemetery Hill. In the public square he got into an Eleventh Corps jam. Surely there were thousands of men in this small square, elbowing each other, cursing, crying: "Which way? Which way?" The ground was littered with rifles, loaded and capped. Mr. Coutts trod carefully lest they should explode under his feet. Presently he heard some stentor roar: "This way, men! This way to the batteries on the hill!" He saw a man on horseback pointing with a crutch. It was Farrabee. Fugitives crowded by hundreds into and along the street up which he was pointing; but as fast as the square emptied it was filled again. The pressure of the enemy became stronger every moment. Finally the rebel yell rang in Mr. Coutts's very ear. He saw an officer plunging through the rabble, and followed. The officer thought Mr. Coutts was pursuing him. Together they passed headlong over fences, up alleys through gardens. When the officer bolted into a woodshed, Mr. Coutts did likewise. It electrified him to see by the officer's stars that his fellow-fugitive was a major-general! The major-general laughed till the sticks of wood tumbled about him.

"That was a close shave," said he.

The two covered themselves with the sticks, building a breathing-hole by aid of a wood-horse.

At the moment of their exit from the square, Pasque entered it. Within a few feet of him was Farrabee. Pasque raised his revolver. But something that came leaping from his heart struck down his arm.

"Why didn't you shoot the damned Yankee?" said a comrade, indignantly; "now he's off!"

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"Because I know him personally, and have a grudge against him," replied Pasque. "It would have been murder."

Farrabee had reached Gettysburg with the Eleventh Corps. Po and Jule had gone on the field; he had remained in town. Another rout! Was it to go on this way to the end? Deep, indeed, was his chagrin as, under fire from a jubilant enemy, he now passed at panic speed up the slope of Cemetery Hill.

On the crest, in the middle of the turnpike, was General Hancock, composedly sitting his horse. Sent by Meade as proxy chief, he had become of a sudden the genius of the field. He was at the point of a new V—much sharper than Mr. Coutts's V, and small at this moment, but destined to become the greatest ever configured upon the continent.

Coming thus out of the humiliating hubbub of the town upon the least expected of scenes, Farrabee's amazement was complete.

"You seem to like the looks of things up here," said Hancock.

The whole height was occupied. Great numbers of cannon were in place. Aids were galloping about.

"General," cried Farrabee, "as God's my witness, this is the prettiest sight I've ever laid eyes on!"

Seeing Hancock glance at his Sanitary badge, he added: "I'm an old artilleryman, sir, knocked out for cause. I was paroled at Malvern; but I've heard that my exchange has reached Washington. I'd like a chance to go in again. I wish you'd switch me over to the fighting arm."

"See General Hunt," said Hancock; "he'll be up in the morning. His staff is down to an aid and an orderly."

In another moment he had spurred away, but wheeled and beckoned Farrabee to his side.

"Didn't you say the prettiest sight you'd ever seen was this on the hill-top here?"

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"The very prettiest, sir."

"Take it back, man. Look through the trees to the plain over there on the left."

Farrabee peered in the direction indicated. What he saw was Buford's cavalry drawn up in the fields between the Cemetery and Seminary Ridges. The plain was almost a mile wide. The troopers were in line of battalions in mass. Accoutrements glittered in the golden light of the sun, dipping for a plunge behind the mountains. Thousands of sabres caught up the glow. The men who had opened the battle in the morning stood ready to rebegin it in the evening.

Shoes! shoes! Nobody thought of shoes now. By this time everything from everywhere was coming towards Gettysburg. A gash had been cut, and blood was hurrying to the region of the wound. The two army chiefs, each slow to stake his all on an unseen field, for hours had felt the irresistible centripetal pull. Meade was still at Taneytown; Lee approaching the battlefield.

Traveller knew the sound of distant artillery almost as well as his master. No spur was needed in his flanks from the time the general's cavalcade left Cashtown. It was a well-mounted party of gentlemen, who rode with assurance and dignity rather than haste. Yet they overtook Colonel Le Butt and Peter John.

Le Butt sat his saddle, hat in hand, as General Lee came walking his horse over the brow of a hill. Whiter hair never framed a redder face than Colonel Le Butt's. Nor have many men worn a higher look than he now put on as he greeted the Confederate leader.

"I desire above all things, sir, the privilege of riding by your side as far as from here to the rise of the next hill. I shall speed, sir, as you speed; so that there may be no lessening of the gait you may wish to pursue."

At a motion from General Lee, the two rode together. Colonel Le Butt talked vehemently, with many gesticu-

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lations. The staff, riding a rod in rear, thought he had brought news of the battle. They were surprised when General Lee beckoned for Peter John.

"Boy," said the general, "is it true that you are guilty of all the acts charged against your young master?"

"Yes, sir," said Peter John; "it is true."

"It's too bad," said General Lee; "in so far as I have been a party to the wrong done your son—a most gallant officer, Colonel Le Butt, a true and loyal soldier, deeply loved among gentlemen in this army—I hope you will forgive me. I shall order the court to dismiss his case, and at the first opportunity shall restore him to full rank and honor. Send him to me, sir."

General Lee pushed forward, and the cavalcade closed up. The party was within three miles of Gettysburg. Evidences of the battle were visible in the road and in the fields on either hand. The farm-houses had become hospitals. Surgeons were at work in every clump of trees. On the crest of Seminary Ridge General Lee reined in Traveller, unslung his glasses, and viewed the field.

Colonel Le Butt passed down into Gettysburg and vainly looked for Pasque.

Pasque himself was looking for Po. "*She* must be here, since *he* is," thought Pasque.

There she was, at last—in the hall at the Almshouse, with hundreds of wounded about her. Pasque stood stock still, devouring her. She felt his presence and looked up. A myriad things flew from eye to eye in a moment—surprise, sympathy, tendernesses. She was shocked because he was so haggard; he by reason of her pallor. But with their surroundings emotions must be suppressed.

"What can I do to help you?" said he.

"Your people have drawn their lines by this time, have they not?" she asked.

"Yes; do you wish to go through?"

"Only that I may procure chloroform. There's dread-

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ful lack of it here. It's said the other army is just beyond the town. Get a pass for me, my dear Pasque, and I will fetch or send the chloroform."

Pasque failed to get the pass at Ewell's head-quarters, whither he first went. The sallow, bird-eyed lieutenant-general was hopping about on his crutches, busy with a thousand things. At this moment he was in a quandary. Night was falling. A powerful division was just up, fresh for fighting. Should he push on with it over Cemetery Hill or wait till daybreak? Jackson would have pushed on. Ewell held back, and thereby, as some say, lost the battle and doomed the Confederacy.

Pasque went to General Early.

"To be sure," said this strange compound, in his shrill voice, drawling; "it's to help our men, isn't it, now? Besides, I've heard some good things about that young lady. The Yankee General Barlow is wounded, and Gordon is about to send over for Mrs. Barlow, who happens to be with the enemy. Let Miss Groudy take his message and ours, too."

It was now dark, and Pasque had some trouble in seeing Po out Baltimore Street. Briefly, each told the other surprising news. Pasque felt that her faith in him was unshakable, and rejoiced.

"This is risky business," said he, at last. "I'll walk ahead of your ambulance and wave a lantern. Drive slowly, Jule. Now," he added, after some moments, during which he thrilled to his heart, fearing for Po's sake a blast of fire and lead; "there's the sentinel. I hear the challenge."

He gave the lantern to Po. "Good-bye!" said he. She put out her hand. He fondled it and vanished.

"Who comes there?" cried the sentinel.

"A friend," said Po.

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign."

"A friend without the countersign."

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"Halt!"

Jule reined in the horses.

"Officer of the guard!" sang out the picket.

Directly a lieutenant came running up. He swung the lantern so that he could see all that was to be seen, and examined Po's letters.

"Pass on," said he.

At midnight the moon was shining full and serene. Very still was the world. Only for the rumbling of wheels, the tramp of a column of men, the crack of a hoof as it struck a stone—only for these faint sounds was there lack of perfect quietude over the wide field where the two armies lay. A mounted party came up from the south on Taneytown Road. Johnsey led it. He spoke little—a pointed question, a brief answer. General Meade was the questioner. He rode along the lines of sleeping troops. The halts were frequent. Rod by rod the field was scanned. The chief threw back the flap of his slouch and looked up at the moon. Aquiline, resolute, stern—his was the face of a man to trust in a crisis. He measured the time it would take the moon to dip to the mountains. Golden the light, and golden the hours for him. He rejoiced that the roads would be well lit for such of his troops as were still hurrying towards the goal where would be determined the continuity or overthrow of the beloved Union.



Chapter XXXVI

DRAMATIC MOMENTS

“**A**S a martial spectacle that beats anything I ever saw,” exclaimed an officer of Hancock’s staff.

It was mid-afternoon. The morning had been quiet. Johnsey had just ridden up with a message from headquarters. Hancock—one knee on the ground, an elbow on the other knee—was looking on in amazement. His pipe, usually in his mouth in time of battle, now spilt out its fire, unregarded, on a stone at his side.

Turn the hour-hand of a watch to twelve, and the minute-hand to two. The V thus indicated was the Union V from the time it was formed until two o’clock. Turn the minute-hand to three. The wider V now shown was the formation of the Union line at three o’clock. The change was caused by the advance of the Third Corps from the line assigned it between Cemetery Hill and the Round Tops to higher ground nearer the enemy. It was a sudden and sensational advance, precipitating terrific battle. Not that the whole leg of the V was thrown forward. There was a half-way hinge, as at the knee. The Second Corps held to the old line; the Third adventured a new. With lines dressed, banners floating high, bayonets glittering, the eight thousand wearers of the diamond badge passed forward as on parade. A Second Corps band struck up a polka. Cheers arose.

“A bold move, sir,” ventured Johnsey.

“It’s a foolish move,” said Hancock. “It will play the devil. Ride to head-quarters at once and report a dangerous gap on this front.”

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As Johnsey sped back over the brow of the hill he met General Meade, spurring towards Emmitsburg Road.

"Damn it, sir, don't I see it!" cried Meade, receiving the message. A little later he was in excited colloquy with the Third Corps commander. They roared at each other, for an artillery outburst was shaking earth and air.

"But you are too far out," Meade insisted.

"Very well, sir. I'll withdraw."

"I wish to God you could, sir! I do, as I'm a living man. But you see, sir, those people do not intend to let you. General Warren!" he called.

Warren—young, handsome, graceful, alert—reined his horse in close to his commander's.

The artillery chief came riding up, attended by Farrabee.

"Bully for Sickles!" shouted Farrabee in Johnsey's ear. "You don't think so, eh? Well, I think it's bully-good. He's got the fight of his life on his hands; and he's not going to make it back there in the hollow."

"Why, look at his line," exclaimed Johnsey—"two fronts! He must defend this road, and the angle there at the peach orchard, and the ground between the orchard and the Round Tops. Don't think you can't be mistaken, Mr. Farrabee."

There was bitterness in the fling, for Johnsey had learned of the blunder affecting Pasque, and with Po had planned to correct it. She was to remain within the Union lines; the chloroform was to be taken into town by a paroled Confederate officer who would explain the contretemps.

At a nod from Warren, Johnsey accompanied him. They pushed for the Round Tops, Farrabee following. A fox, startled out of his den by the pouncing down upon him of vociferous thousands and the thumping of gun-butts on a roof accustomed only to soft footfalls or the tap of a dropping acorn, glided from under a rock and

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ran in advance of the horses, passing in and out along a fence-row, looked back as he came to a wheat-field, sped across it, and disappeared in a thicket of briers in Plum Run morass.

"Trotting on ahead of us," said Johnsey, "is a topographical expert who might be of great service if we could catch him and extract from him what he knows about the gorges, swales, knolls, and timber-strips in this part of the field."

But Warren's mind was on another matter.

"Sproule," said he, "General Meade is concerned about this flank. Isn't Lee blowing smoke in our eyes while he turns our left by throwing a corps beyond that mountain? Go up Big Round Top, if you can, and find a lookout. You may save us from disaster."

By this time they had reached the crest of Little Round Top. Some signalmen were there. Equipping himself with flags, Johnsey made all haste up the greater height, green with thick foliage from its base in Plum Run Gorge to its very summit.

Plum Run Gorge was open. No trees grew here, nor on the western face of Little Round Top, except dwarfish cedars. It was an enormous scooped-out place, offensive in the eyes of the gods, who, in their wish to fill where the devil had dug, had thrown out of the sky one-ton boulders, hundred-ton boulders, thousand-ton boulders, lichen-spotted,—gray themselves, but wearing velvety jackets of moss. Here were briers, sumac, wild roses; and here also crevices among the rocks known only to the rattlesnake, or to the squirrel, which from remotest ages had given the rattlesnake his pouncing theme. But beyond the mouth of the gorge were fields of the cloth of gold, stretches of yellow wheat, carpets of clover soft under foot.

For many minutes Warren fingered the screw of his spy-glass. He could see no sign of the enemy on the

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idge a half-mile away. Below him was a long ledge that jutted like a giant's thumb into the gorge. The tip of the thumb was a grotesque heap of granite. It was the Devil's Den. Near it was a battery. Pointing to this he said to Farrabee: "Go send me a shot, good and true, into that fringe of woods over yonder. If the enemy's there, I'd like to know it."

"I'll make her hiss," said Farrabee; "depend on that. Jeff Davis shall hear her in Richmond."

"He's a blowhard—that's what *he* is," commented a signalman. "I'll bet he couldn't hit Big Round Top."

But Farrabee's shot took the air with a whistle and cut the timber just where Warren wished it. And instantly the young general saw what he feared to see. Betrayed into motion by the loud-whistling missile, Hood's riflemen stirred as in quick concert for a thousand yards or more, and the flash of sunlight on their gun-barrels disclosed lurking masses of them far overlapping the Union left.

From among the signalmen Warren picked out the likeliest courier. "Hurry to General Meade," said he. "Tell him I need a division to hold this hill. The rest of you stay here. Wave your flags till the last minute. Stick it out, boys. This is the key to the whole battlefield. If we surrender it we're lost."

He himself took the timber on the eastern slope, spurring as over a precipice.

Farrabee lingered, meanwhile, on Devil's Den ridge. Behind the battery were the "Orange Blossoms." Wherever the blue lines reached at Gettysburg one found New Yorkers. Farrabee was gazing at the spot whither he had sent the rifle bolt.

"They're coming," said he.

"So they are—God pity 'em!" said a "Blossom," biting his plug.

The enemy appeared in heavy columns of battalion,

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deployed in four lines of battle and double-quickened down the far declivity. The battery-men changed from shell to grape. The whistling in the air turned to vicious cat-screams. But nothing checked the enemy. They were Alabamians, Texans, Georgians. The Alabamians entered the timber on the slope of Round Top, the Georgians bore to the left, the Texans came straight on. The "Orange Blossoms" grappled with the Texans.

"Never say die!" trumpeted the major of the "Orange Blossoms."

"Steady!" shouted the colonel from his saddle, his arms folded.

In much the same way Farrabee roared to the gunners.

A lanyard was prematurely pulled, and a gunner's hand blown off.

"Don't stop to look at that poor devil," said the major; "keep up the fire, or, better still——"

He rode up to the colonel, who shook his head "no;" then nodded "yes."

"Charge!" cried the major.

And the "Orange Blossoms" sprang down the slope towards the Texans.

A cannon-shot took off the head of a "Blossom," but his legs and trunk kept on by impetus for many yards.

"Hi, there!" shouted a comrade; "you've lost your hat!"

Some of those who saw fit to laugh swung back their heads, fell, quivered.

"It's the devil's hoedown," thought Farrabee, himself excited by the infernal uproar and the smell and taste of gunpowder.

The charging "Orange Blossoms" soon shattered themselves. Some came crawling back to the cannon. The major lay, head down, among the bowlders. The colonel was gasping in a patch of briars. From the ground, very near the Texans, an arm was rising and falling. An

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"Orange Blossom" was motioning his comrades onward. Among a thousand things to see, this was the strangest. The arm jerked up into the air, swung forward, fell. More and more mechanical grew the motion. At last it ceased.

Ascending Little Round Top, Farrabee peered down the boulder-strewn western slope at the Texans and Georgians swarming up. Then he cocked his head side-wise. Was that a shout from the flankers in Round Top timber? Had they swept so far around as to envelop the little twin mountain? Or was it—could it be?

By reason of rock and tree-trunk and breakneck hollow, Warren dared not fly in body as he flew in spirit when he passed down the Union side of Little Round Top. It was spur at the flank, but hard, quick hand on the bridle rein. That his horse broke not a leg, with four hoofs sparking slippery boulders, was a marvel.

The first troops he hailed were O'Rorke's. They were hurrying towards the Peach Orchard front.

Warren began to halloo to O'Rorke rods away.

"Orders! Orders!" cried O'Rorke, shaking his head and pointing with his sword in the direction of the Peach Orchard.

"Let the blame be on me," said Warren. "This is the crisis, and here's the spot to save the day. For God's sake, O'Rorke—and you an Irishman!"

"File left!" commanded O'Rorke, swinging his column up the mountain-side.

Farrabee gave a great shout when he saw O'Rorke's colors among the trees.

"It's a matter of minutes which will be here first," said he, again glancing over the rocky ledge down upon the enemy.

"Of seconds, you mean," spoke up the last signalman, as he folded his flag.

The Union troops were first at the summit. They were

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breathing hard; but O'Rorke, crying: "This way, boys!" made no stop. He went over the topmost wall of rock with a bound and down the slope and closed with the enemy, butt and bayonet, among the boulders.

"That's a sight a man don't often see," commented Farrabee. "First you jump a mountain, then you tackle a fiend. Bully for O'Rorke! He's checked them—he's staggered them, sure pop! And, by God! look at that—ah! that's too bad, poor fellow! He's gone to glory by lightning express. I'm sorry we've lost him. We need a thousand O'Rorkes here."

"They're coming," spoke up Warren, at his back. "We'll hold this height, I'm thinking. Suppose you spur down in the timber and use your extraordinary lung-power on the battery horses coming up."

It was uncertain footing for the horses there among the rocks. They plunged, fell, got up, and plunged again. There was a babel among the cannoneers, each at a wheel, straining as the horses strained. All that Farrabee could do was to pilot the way. He wished for Tommy Beeswax now for the first time on any battlefield—Tommy Beeswax, who could drive a six-mule team up Popocatapetl. Perhaps Farrabee's picturesque muleteer phrases and his incessant bellowing helped a trifle. Some of the Fifth Corps men turned their faces towards him and laughed even in the excitement of their forward dash.

Johnsey, on Big Round Top, heard this stentor voice pleading with the poor artillery horses in the name of God. At any rate, the guns were planted on the summit and the Round Tops were saved.

Farrabee knew that what he had seen at Devil's Den and Little Round Top was but a part of the battle on the Union left. He had seen with concentrated sight—the enormous boulders, the lizards, the snakes, stealing down into crevices of rock, the dying men. It had been

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cyclopean battle, but only a scrap of the panorama had been revealed to him.

Not so with Johnsey. His first glance from Big Round Top was eastward to the Federal rear. An immense number of wagons lay parked in the near fields. The ammunition train was there, and the medical train. Over by Rock Creek were droves of beef cattle, under guard. Marching up in a cloud of dust were the very last of the Union troops to reach the field, the blue cross division of the Sixth Corps.

All this came to him in a sweep of his unaided eye. Then, focussing his powerful Leipsic glasses upon field, fence-row, lane, and forest-patch, he searched the ground methodically, acre by acre.

"All right in our rear," he signalled; "but the enemy laps us due west."

Turning, then, he watched the progress of the battle. Men looked like pigmies down below,—dealing death, taking death. The sounds came distinctly up,—cannon-crack and battle-cry, yells and hurrahs, hurrahs and yells,—and though he did not hear the moans of those who were in anguish, he saw through his glasses a thousand impeachments of war in their contorted faces reflecting torture and a last hope lost. He tried to think out the grand moves of the game. Had the enemy merely pounced upon the reckless Third Corps? No, there was a deeper purpose. Lee had caused Longstreet to strike the Union left on end, with the intention of curling it up and pounding the whole line to pieces from the Round Tops to Cemetery Hill. It was to be an oblique battle, fed brigade by brigade, corps by corps, as it should roll northward along Emmitsburg Road to Gettysburg. Seeing the drama thus unfold itself in all its magnitude, and fearing lest he were about to witness the downfall of the Union, Johnsey suffered something akin to an ague. But gazing towards the Union lines to see what

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Meade was doing in this greatest crisis of the battle, he was reassured. They were coming. The earth to the northeast was patched with blue. Meade was picking up his army in fragments and hurling them to the danger-point. And soon in the Wheat-Field, where he had followed the fox, was a whirl of contending legions. It was not possible to tell by the banners which was the gray line, which the blue. There was a constant tossing and surge and grand pirouette. The living trampled the dead.

"My God!" cried Johnsey, and the very roots of his hair pricked with thrills.



Chapter XXXVII

FLOWER O' DIXIE

HAD Johnsey's glasses enabled him to recognize individuals, he might have seen Colonel Le Butt under the palmetto flag of De Saussure's Fifteenth Huguenots, Kershaw's brigade. De Saussure, an old friend, had welcomed Le Butt as a battlefield guest. The colonel was downcast. Unfortunately, he gave full credence to a rumor that Pasque had been killed.

It was past five o'clock. Hood, wounded, had just been borne to the rear. Longstreet, sitting his horse with McLaws at the edge of the Seminary Ridge woods, was unconcernedly brushing from his hat a coating of bark and twigs brought down by Federal shells. Later, he took off his Mexican spurs and put them into his pocket, for he was about to advance on foot with Kershaw against the Peach Orchard. No one would have thought this simple-mannered, brown-bearded Longstreet capable of putting himself and his powerful corps at cross-purposes with Lee; yet he and Lee were at odds. There had been spirited interviews, marked by doggedness on Longstreet's part and dignity and insistence on Lee's. The disagreement was as to tactical procedure. Longstreet wished to manœuvre the Union army off its heights; Lee was for direct assault. In his emphasis he shook his fist at the blue masses. There they were. He would wrestle with them and throw them and destroy them. Never was Lee so beset or so unlike himself. Never was man so stubborn as Longstreet. Between them they lost their golden moments.

"Old Pete Longstreet's a reb within a reb—a born

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reb," said the licensed gasconader of the Fifteenth Huguenots. "He's at daggers' points with 'Dirty Dick' Ewell, and bimeby he'll be on the outs with Uncle Robert. Poor Unc' Robert—battling with the dysentery, the devil, the Yankees, and Old Pete to boot!"

"Good old cognac!" exclaimed Colonel Le Butt. "A man wants it even if he isn't in Virginia."

He was drinking with Barksdale, who had served with him in the Federal Congress. They were much alike, these two—both having long, white hair; but Le Butt's skin was soft and smooth, even if it were fiery, while Barksdale had scarcely an unscarred inch upon his leathery buff.

"I want to tell you something," continued Le Butt. "After getting the sad news about Pasque last night, I searched high and low for a dram. At last I fell in with a seven-up party in a sutler's tent. Gentlemen, I shall tell it in Richmond that on your battlefields you pile up dead men to hide your roulette-tables and faro layouts. France, Austria, and England were there in the tent."

"They black their boots to see a battle—those foreign attachés," laughed De Saussure.

"And wax their moustaches," said Barksdale. "Proceed, Le Butt."

"What surprised me was that the foreigners saluted my Peter John, called him 'Count,' and invited him to join them in the game."

"Count?"

"Count de Pantalba. The boy's been masquerading as Count de Pantalba, and gambling in the Richmond hotels on Yankee spy-money. Messieurs had some brandy, so I let Peter John win their pile. Then I took him by his chain and marched him off. It was their turn to be surprised. Peter John's watch-guard, gentlemen, is in reality a chain welded round his body. I lock it to my wrist when I sleep. Dangerous? Oh, yes," drawled

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the colonel. "I woke the other night and found the muzzle of my own pistol tickling my own ear!"

"The scoundrell!" snarled Barksdale; "he's ripe for lead!"

"That's one reason why I'm begging De Saussure to let me cross the fields with him," said the colonel, glancing at the formidable batteries and lines of blue infantry at the Peach Orchard. "Peter John shall take his punishment from the men he has served."

"Good God!" said Barksdale; "a nigger in our line of battle! Never, Colonel Le Butt!"

"I'll lead him by his chain," said Le Butt, persuasively. "Peter John is doomed to die!"

"But you forget your own peril," protested De Saussure. "I'll not have it, sir. No, sir!"

"Gentlemen," said Le Butt, "this disgrace Peter John has brought upon my family is not my first disgrace. General Barksdale, does your memory serve you? Do you bring to mind how I once figured as the Prince of Fire-eaters? Shall I not eat a little fire now? Peter John and I will go in together."

"You have no sword," said De Saussure.

"I'll cut myself a hickory stick, and march with that."

"Let me fix it," spoke up Barksdale; "we'll give the nigger ten paces and make him run for it."

But the gentle Kershaw disapproved. He passed in rear of his troops, saying: "The yellow boy who betrayed Major Le Butt, of the Louisiana Brigade, is to run for his life. Withhold your fire. The Yankees will shoot him."

For a second, terror came into Peter John's face when he learned how he was to pay for all his treacheries. But he did not get down on his knees. Nothing could quite destroy his spirit of cunning. Only a pungent odor from his body and excessive sweat betokened his realization of this, his mortal, crisis.

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"Are you ready?" asked Barksdale.

Peter John stepped ten paces into the field, stealing ground as he glided.

"Off with you!" shouted Barksdale.

Peter John bent low as he ran, casting quick glances backward. The group about Le Butt drew Federal shells, which exploded near, beclouding the view.

"Why, he'll get away!" cried Barksdale.

Peter John, already many rods off, was approaching a fence bordering a field of grain. Some revolver-shots sounded from Barksdale's party. Peter John tumbled from the fence into the thick wheat.

Colonel Le Butt went behind a tree and raised a flask to his lips. He drank slowly. Tears ran down into his white moustaches as he thought of Peter John writhing in the wheat.

"Oh, that smart little yellow boy of Martello!" he said to himself, as with De Saussure he rejoined the Fifteenth on the left.

Suddenly some of the men began to fire. They had discovered Peter John emerging from a distant gully. He had crept along a rain trench in the fields under cover of the grain. At this moment he was running towards the Federal line, waving his handkerchief. He fell, but got up, and ran on till he was lost in the timber by the Rose farm-house.

"Many's the time we've seen Miss Molly Cottontail dodge into a brier-patch in just that style—hey, Le Butt?" laughed De Saussure. "But there's the signal-gun. We'll catch Peter John yet. F-o-r-ward! Dress on the colors!" he shouted, as the South Carolinians, with the Georgians of Semmes's brigade at their heels, sprang into the open and ran for the Peach Orchard salient.

Midfield, Le Butt was blown. He could not keep up with De Saussure.

"It was a deuce of a run for Peter John," said the

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colonel, leaning upon his walking-stick. He panted like a dog that had followed a fox half the day. But, getting his second wind, he hurried towards the spot where De Saussure was joining battle. Some of the regiments, caught at close quarters by Peach Orchard batteries blowing triple canister, dissolved in blood. De Saussure failed to find Peter John, but found death instead. Viewing the slaughter of the pick of the South Carolina youth, Colonel Le Butt altogether forgot the wretched Peter John.

"Were you hit?" asked Barksdale, when Le Butt reappeared at the edge of Seminary Ridge woods, with De Saussure's body. At the same moment the body of General Semmes was borne to the rear. "No? Then come with me. It's my turn. We two old fire-eaters will play the fiery meteor. We'll play hell, Le Butt. Get on your horse. That's right. Let it be noised down among the palmettos that Le Butt, the Prince of Fire-eaters, tasted battle with Barksdale. F-o-r-ward!" he shouted, as he threw his hat upon the ground, giving his long hair to the wind. "Forward, Mississippians! Follow me!"

Le Butt, likewise uncovering and loosening his locks, spurred up-hill and down at Barksdale's side. Through the Peach Orchard rode the two; past the Wheat-Field, with its vast of corpses; past Trostle's, where hundreds of artillery horses lay. Six batteries were chariot-racing in the path they made. Wofford, with fresh Georgians, followed.

"They've massed their cannon in our front," said Barksdale. "It's a solid wall of brass and iron. We'll breathe a while in this scrub timber here. At dusk we'll rush 'em."

The Union batteries were McGilvery's. At that moment, which was the sunset moment, McGilvery was heard far beyond the mountains. It was an outburst. He screeched, he screamed, he roared. The smoke above him

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ascended as from a forest on fire. It seemed to Farrabee, who had helped to mass the pieces, that a thousand gunners, quick as cats, were laboring there on Meade's old line. No wonder Barksdale tucked in his Mississippians as a lion tucks in his tail and squatted in the underbrush.

But suddenly McGilvery hushed himself. The First Minnesota had just gone to glory in a charge that secured the line; and now General Willard was leading his New Yorkers into the scrub to see if something were there that ought not to be there. Farrabee, spying for McGilvery, followed the New Yorkers. There were some abandoned cannon in that part of the field, and he was to see whether they could be brought in. As he had chafed himself raw that day, and set his old wound bleeding, he had left his horse with Tommy Beeswax, and now swung himself swiftly along on crutches.

An afterglow from the path of the sun lit the scene and helped to make it marvellous. Wild roses and dead men. Many awesome sights did Farrabee see as he followed in the wake of the charging troops, whose huzzas could be heard far out towards the lost Peach Orchard front.

"Abolitionist! Abolitionist! Hi, there, you cursed Abolitionist!" some one called.

Farrabee looked around to see who had spoken.

The man was in a patch of trampled grass, by a clump of haw, his head against a stone. There was a spatter of blood upon his shirt and a pool of it on the ground beside him.

Farrabee wet the sufferer's lips with a few drops from his canteen.

"Is it not so?" asked the dying man. "Are you not one and the same with an Abolitionist I knew in Washington? Did not you and your crowd bring on this war? Come, now. Tell me. As I see you, I swear you are

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one and the same with an Abolitionist I've often thought of."

Farrabee, hard to abash, felt strange emotions. The light out of the sky was uncanny; the eyes of the dying man were wonderfully lustrous and searching and rebukeful. It was as if they were saying: "I arraign you, Farrabee. You are responsible for these ten thousand deaths—you! you!! YOU!!!"

"I was an Abolitionist—that's true enough," said Farrabee. "Of course, I was. Curse me for the Old Original, if you wish. Yes, indeed, poor soul! I did just about as much as any other man to sow the seed of all that's in fruit here round about us. It stinks, too, this fruit,—or will by and by. But see here, Reb,—venerable Reb,—I'm sorry for you. I'm sorry for your white hairs. In God's name, why do you look at me in that fashion? And who's that other one dying over there in the mint patch?"

"Why, don't you know him? That's Barksdale. We came in together. Ha, ha! Abolitionist! Behold in us the Fire-eaters!"

"Where's Yancey? Where's Toombs? Where's Rhett?" said Farrabee.

"Where are the Abolitionists who harried them?" said Colonel Le Butt. "Are you the only one in uniform? Give me your hand, sir. Pasque, Pasque! We're not disgraced! Peter John! Where are you, Peter John? Come here, boy! Come here!"

Pasque had not as yet heard of Colonel Le Butt's visit to the army. Nor had he been found by the paroled officer whom Johnsey and Po had commissioned to undo the mischief. He was still in Ewell's part of Lee's semi-circular five-mile line; and, because Po had not come back, was heavier-hearted than ever. The volatile, chaffing, joke-cracking "Tigers" incensed Pasque with the very clack of their tongues as he lay among them under

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cover of a swell of ground just beyond the town's edge, waiting the word to spring forward for the guns on East Cemetery Hill.

It was Old Perique's chatter that annoyed Pasque most. Perique was "head Tiger." He was a voluble graybeard, with moustaches like ravelled rope-ends. It was Perique who had originated the rebel yell. That was away back in Mexican war times, under Jeff Davis at Buena Vista. In Perique's opinion, General Ewell was a long while getting to work. Already he was three hours late,—for he should have struck in concert with Longstreet, and Longstreet's distant battle was dying down in rumbles. Perique criticised the generals; and, being fond of Pasque, thought it well as the sun went down to sing for him in good old Gulf Coast French certain husky rantans about wars and wenches.

Far to their left many thousands of men were passing from Hanover Road towards Culp's, whose topmost trees were still lit by the fading sky-flush over beyond the town, but whose gloomy base would soon be letting out bats and nighthawks to greet the moon then peeping up.

"The devil!" said Perique; "they've halted at the creek."

"To rectify their lines," said Pasque.

"To roll up their pants," said Perique, disgustedly. "Why don't they rush the hill? It'll be as black as a wolf's mouth in under that timber by and by with every tree lousy with leaves and the moon as lazy as a damned Virginian! And why don't *we* move forward, Major Le Butt?"

"I don't know a thing about it," said Pasque. "But there's a plan of battle, Perique. Don't you worry. It's going to be a beautiful moon."

Perique sang a rantan. After that he lit his pipe and blew smoke to keep off the midges. Soon there was a

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fierce crackling in the woods at Culp's; a roar. Smoke clouds ascended. The beautiful hill, which had existed for ages to feed the creek with crystal water, the squirrels with nuts, and the wild-flowers with leaf-mould, broke out around its crown with a chaplet of fire.

All night the contesting troops fired to each other's flashes. In spite of the moonlight, it was dark in the woods, and there were dark and desperate happenings there. A battalion of Marylanders, fighting under the red flag, climbed high and clung to a wall of the hill. Some of them scouted as far as Baltimore pike. There was a great gap at that point in the Union line, for most of the brigades had been sent towards the Round Tops; and an alert Confederate division commander would have gone through, changing history. But there was lack of a Jackson in front of Culp's. Again was somebody losing the battle for Lee.

" 'An-nan-Lou-eesee-an! ' " cried Perique. " Major Le Butt, it's yours to-night to lay your hand on the first cannon. We won't need the ammunition wagons this beautiful evening. Peter La Fourch, stop your snorting. Can't you run a mile or two without blowing like a mad bull? Your breath smells of Dutch onions and apple-jack. Look at me, Peter La Fourch. I've breath to waste. Damn the Gringoes! Damn the Yankees! Damn everything but the town of New Orleans! Bu-ee-na Vista! 'An-nan-Lou-eesee-an! ' "

The stone wall at the foot of East Cemetery Hill was overrun. Some Schwarzer Jaegers, who had begun their campaigning uniformed in black and silver, with a black flag and skull and cross-bones insignia, retreated sullenly up the slope, firing random shots.

" They're beaten," shouted Pasque to Perique. " The Yankee gunners can't depress their pieces low enough to harm us. We've got the hill! Dress on the colors!" he cried.

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Every one was running up the hill. The moon was just high enough to show the blue of the starry cross.

"'An-nan-Lou-eesee-an!'" wheezed Perique. "Major, your hand on the first cannon. That's the boy! She's ours! And all four of the ladies,—God bless them in the moonlight!"

"Press on, boys! Brave boys!" cried Pasque. "We'll have the other battery in a minute. This hill belongs to us. Hoke's men are breaking through."

Pasque felt better now. Po Groudy was on another planet. Hot and brutish he was at this moment,—as hot and brutish as Old Perique, singing his rantans about the nectar on the lips of an octoroon. Pasque and Perique and all the "Tigers" were at it point and butt with the cannoneers. Blue infantry came up. Pistols were used—muskets, bayonets, stones. Heads were split with limber-pins. Very fiendish were the gunners, who said scarce a word, but fought for their pieces as though they were of gold and the very last the Union owned.

"Back, Major Le Butt," cried Perique. "Hoke's beaten on the left. I see ten thousand Yankee bayonets ashine across the field. The cursed moon's done it, and we must go down the way we came up."

He seized Pasque around the waist and whirled him, waltzed him, dragged him down to the foot of the hill.

"'An-nan-Lou-eesee-an!'" You can try it again tomorrow, Major Le Butt. The devil fought with the Yankee cannoneers. You can try it again, sweetheart; but as for me—ah! ah! ah! I've got a hole in my belly as big as your hat! Take me to New Orleans, if you can; but if you can't, bury me in the first dung-heap."

The battle of the second day was over. Lee had failed to force the Union lines. There were many reasons why he had failed. There had been lack of concert among his generals. Picked men, each of whom he trusted as he trusted his own eyes, had failed him. Indeed, he him-

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self had failed himself. It would not do to say, oracularly, that as Meade had suffered from over-zeal on Sickles's part, so Lee had suffered from lack of zeal on Longstreet's part. A score of causes were intermixed. One overtopping cause was the valor of the Federal troops.

Po realized this. She had spent the afternoon in the field hospital in rear of the Round Tops. Jule was with her; and so was Tommy Beeswax. The tents and tables were in a grove with good water near. At first the surgeons had so easy a time that they kept their coats on and smoked cheroots between operations. Soon they took off their coats and tore the sleeves from their shirts. Not a minute but an ambulance came in, and the drivers hardly waited to unload. By six the grove was filled; by seven horribly gorged. Each surgeon became something of a fiend. Even Po, in her butcher's apron, was no angel now; and Jule had taken to swearing. Grumble, grumble, grumble. Jule grumbled like the guns. But nobody could hear her. Groans and lamentations drowned even the roar of McGilvery's cannon. Higher and higher grew the heaps by the amputation-tables. And here now was Sickles, with a leg to cut off.

"Can you get me a light, miss?" he asked Po, who was helping in the operation; "my cigar's gone out."

Towards ten Po and Jule left the hospital for the front. Po felt that there were men on the ground in greater need of help than those with whom the surgeons were working.

Plaintive and pitiful past all recording were the sounds heard by Po as she walked among the victims on the field of carnage. The moon lit the way for her. Many times she stopped, shaped her two hands into a trumpet, and sang out the ambulance call, so that it sounded a long way off. Jule brought water. Jule was a hundred times more courageous than Po, who did not fear either

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dead men or lurking sharp-shooters, and more courageous than any soldier who had fought on the field. Jule feared the dead men. She expected them to grab her by the ankle as she walked among them. She stood ready to smash her bucket over the head of that monster with a horrible look on his face; and to her every corpse was an explosive thing, worse than the king-crow of Old Thousand Acres. Laboring for "Li'l Miss," Jule would go pluck the devil by the horns; but her affrighted eyes shone white in the moonbeams on the night of the second day at Gettysburg. How terribly afraid was Jule; yet how courageous, since she fought her own fears and did what she was told to do.

Death and the moon painted fantastic pictures in the Wheat-Field. They painted silently together. They put a glaze upon thousands of eyeballs, purpled innumerable lids and lips. Teeth and eyes were Horror's favorites; and down into an open mouth the moon would go, painting it to its depths as Po looked peeringly in. And many Endymions the moon found lying there—faces of young men, sweet as if kissed in sleep by the moon. Po stooped to them as she wandered, searching for signs of life. She smoothed back the hair of the poor boys in Plum Run Gorge and the Wheat-Field, kissing them for their mothers. Po and the moon kissed the valorous dead.



Chapter XXXVIII

THE SUPREME EFFORT

SUDDENLY, the sun being up,—and this now the third day,—the mile-long forest front of Culp's rang with the rebel yell. Mr. Coutts heard it under his wood-pile; Johnsey heard it at headquarters, in Taneytown Road hollow; Pasque, burying Old Perique, heard it in a field east of the town.

But in a few moments a thousand of Ewell's men went to the ground; the assault was over, with no gain for Lee. And, as if somebody were working miracles, a roaring artillery fire blew up like a sirocco south of Culp's and southwest-by-south. The woods were whipped by this fire and all the rocks beaten. It was not the iron that killed men so much as it was the shattered fragments of granite split by the ricochet and the angry burst. The Federal artillerymen searched the slope of Culp's foot by foot and the riflery of the Twelfth Corps inch by inch. For seven hours the unengaged troops in other parts of the vast field lay listening to this savage, rasping, detonating "pow-er-up-up," sounding incessantly along Slocum's line and Ewell's. At last Ewell withdrew his living troops beyond the creek.

"Here's Major Le Butt again," said Early to Ewell. "To put it politely, sir, it's a damned shame for a feller like him to be under suspicion after doing what he did last night."

Ewell's eyes were like a duck-hawk's as he looked at Pasque. In fact, they were like a duck-hawk's all the time.

"A court-martial's a court-martial," said he; "and

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General Lee commands this army. If you wish me to write him about your case I'll do it; but what I'd like you to do, major, is to bear a message from me to Pickett. Pickett's going to glory or the grave, I understand. My compliments to General Pickett, sir, and eternal renown."

Pasque rode through town to Seminary Ridge. At his accustomed spot on this height stood General Lee, observing through his glasses the slow rearrangement of his cannon. At times he glanced towards Cemetery Hill, where many brass pieces glittered and burned in the sunshine, stretching thence a long way south to the Round Tops. Twice had the world gone round since he shook his clenched fist at the hill.

A mile to the right of Lee's lookout were Pickett's men. They were flat on the ground, in the full of the broiling sun, behind the rise of Emmitsburg Ridge.

"So Ewell sends a funeral-wreath!" laughed Pickett. "Why didn't he send me a flask of whiskey? What's that? You want to join us in the assault? Why, don't you reckon we fellers can lick the Yanks without your mixing in?"

General Armistead put up a beckoning finger, and Pickett rode with him a few paces aside.

Pasque thought Pickett on this day the beau ideal of a Confederate soldier. The brim of his cap, set saucily sidewise, shaded a reddish, sunburnt face, with vigilant blue eyes under white eyebrows. His moustaches and imperial were tawny-tinted, with some fire of copper in them, and down upon his shoulders tumbled a mass of well-kept hair, as yellow as a young lion's.

"Pardon me," said Pickett, returning to Pasque; "I didn't understand the situation. Of course you'll go in with us. You'll ride with Armistead; and if there are any laurels growing on that Yankee hill over there I hope you'll pluck them."

Armistead explained the field. The Union line was to

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be pierced at a point three-quarters of a mile away, where stood an umbrella-shaped clump of trees.

"By the by," said he; "from what a captured officer tells me, we'll strike Scott Hancock's part of the line. That's tough on me, because we two were closer than brothers in the old army. In bidding him good-bye, I swore I'd fight for Virginia as long as I had a leg to stand on; but vowed I'd never invade the North. And here I am. So you see what a scrape I'm in. I've got to go over there directly and pull my old friend down off his horse. That's a tough job, you'll admit. But the other's tougher. Casually, I must remark: 'Well, Scott, I lied.'"

In his good-nature he was trying to talk the blues out of Pasque; but Pasque was thinking of his own friendship for Johnsey.

At this same hour Johnsey rode up Little Round Top in Meade's train. It was apparent to General Meade that mighty battle was impending. Accompanied by his staff, he passed down the mountain and spurred towards Hancock's line. The sun was at the noon-mark. Though some ten thousand cavalymen were in ferocious combat out Hanover Road, there was a perfect hush upon the larger field. Also there was a taint upon it. With no breeze to speak of, the nostrils were bound to be offended, seeing that the battle was so old. This Friday was not a perfectly clear day, as Thursday had been. It was sultrier. Woolly, white clouds were passing lazily across the sky.

Near the umbrella-trees some Second Corps officers sat around a mess-chest, which served them as a table. On it were pullet and toast.

"Not bad for a battlefield luncheon," said General Meade. "In the old days, gentlemen, your cook would have been knighted on the spot."

"They're going to shell us, general," said Hancock, offering him a seat on a cracker-box.

out his tin-cup for coffee.

The cup was never filled.

"By thunder!—there she

"Yes," exclaimed Hancock

The ball's about to open."

"Disperse, gentlemen," said
his staff.

They had seen a spit of
Napoleon far across the field.
angry crack came the sight
a second crack.

Then instantly the whole
flame and smoke. The out-
teries was almost as quick.
upon their haunches, terrified
the roar and whistle in the air
of a thousand buzz-saws made
they had come upon knots that
heard what seemed to be the
enormous flocks of invisible
monstrous was the roar some
one hundred and fifty thousand
rumbling away for forty miles.

So great was the noise

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"How do you like the serenade, Mr. Farrabee?" shouted Johnsey above the din.

"It's a scorcher," said Farrabee; "a ring-tailed roarer. Bob Lee is making the biggest noise ever made on the American continent, and he'll scare somebody yet."

Near the two a caisson, struck by a shell, exploded with terrific detonation, scattering death. The spot where the caisson had stood was now a huge trench.

"The Rebs are very accommodating," said Farrabee; "they're digging our graves for us."

"Where's Cousin Po?" asked Johnsey, as he watched the teamsters stampeding by the thousand to the rear; "is she within range of this fire?"

"That's what's worrying me," said Farrabee. "She was back there at the field hospital awhile ago; and if she's there now, she's in danger. I'll ride in that direction and see how she's getting on."

At the hospital missiles were plunging in great numbers. Many of the wounded had been killed. Ambulance horses were under the whip, however, and in a little while the last of the sufferers would be in a place of safety. Meantime, Po was encouraging those who had not as yet been taken away.

Farrabee rebuked her. "This won't do," he cried; "jump up and run to the rear."

Hitherto the storm of iron had blown in from the west; but some long-range Whitworths, planted by Lee on the hill north of Gettysburg, now began to send thunderbolts lengthwise the field.

Farrabee knew the wildcat whirr of old. With an artilleryman's instinct he caught the line of the missiles and placed himself in their path, hoping somewhat to shelter Po. As he thus stood, something very vengeful and sufficient struck him and his horse and blew them down upon Po and Jule and the wounded soldiers.

Po's senses left her; but, under Jule's ministrations,

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soon came back. She had been stunned and bruised merely.

Farrabee was still alive when Po went up to him. His neck and one of his shoulders had been horribly torn. At sight of Po a look of intense love came into his eyes.

"How is it with you, my friend?" she gasped.

"Glorious!" said Farrabee; "I feel like a bird on wing. It's a most strange, delicious sensation. I'm flying through the air. There's no pain at all. I've been killed, haven't I? Yet, instead of pain, there's a sort of physical bliss."

"No," said she, "it's spiritual bliss. Your soul is disentangling itself. It's a long flight you're taking, brother,—for you're going to God."

Farrabee shook his head combatively, but smiled upon Po as he died.

Finally the cannonade burnt itself out. At three o'clock the whirring saws and flocks of invisible birds ceased to pass over Cemetery Ridge, upon which lay the carcasses of innumerable horses, hoofs up; remnants of gun carriages; wrecks of exploded caissons; and many brave artillerymen, whose lives, like Farrabee's, had fittingly ended in those terrific concussions.

A premeditated cessation of fire by the Federal batteries had in a measure brought about this silence on the part of Lee, who nevertheless had by this time reached into the very bottom of his pocket for iron; and who, in his dread, must have bethought him of how bad a thing it would be for him should he find himself presently in need of metal for defence. He had sung an enchanter's song to Victory, inviting her to come down into the hollow of his hand; yet, also, he had risked the coming down of Ruin. Now might the Confederacy win and live forever; now might it die.

Alexander, who directed the Confederate artillery,

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knew how empty the limbers were. He scrawled a line to Pickett: "For God's sake, come quick!"

Pickett sped back a few rods to where Longstreet sat.

"General, shall I advance?" said he.

Longstreet kept his lips shut, but inclined his head.

"I shall lead my division forward, sir," proclaimed Pickett.

Coming to his troops, he gave the order: "Left oblique!" His men stepped out as on parade; passed over Wilcox's Georgians, prone in the grass; advanced on a line parallel with Emmitsburg Road; and when opposite the umbrella-trees, faced the Union line. Thus the Virginians had executed a grand half-wheel, very beautiful in the sight of Lee, intently regarding them from his post on the height.

Pickett rode forward an eighth of a mile, drew rein on a knoll, and thence directed his division. Of his brigades, Kemper's advanced on the right, Garnett's on the left, Armistead's between, many paces in rear.

But Pickett's fifteen Virginia regiments were scarcely under the eye of beholders when the troops of Pettigrew and Trimble emerged from the timber on Seminary Ridge and bore down at the quickstep with innumerable bayonets shining in the sun and banners proud above them. Many of these came on with bandaged heads and bloody patches, for they had been the assailants under Heth and Pender in the terrible first day's fight.

Here, now, upon the open plain were three lines of men, each double, extending a full mile north and south and sweeping eastward swiftly and with martial precision. Behind them, their cannon reopened, hurling thunderbolts over their heads and in among the defenders of the Federal crest.

A sense of hopelessness smote many a heart beating under blue on this crest, which, indeed, was only a gentle

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rise of ground, bare and shot-ploughed under the fore-running cannonade.

For a brief space Johnsey was appalled. Then his blood began to run in jumps and surges. As a spectacle this was, indeed, superb. Once in your lifetime you see this, if you're lucky. Something philosophic as to the inequity of human privilege and his own great good luck shot in and out of Johnsey's mind. Privilege! God forgive him! This might be the end of the only America worth mentioning in the geographies!

All the remnants of the Union batteries originally posted on the crest and all the fresh batteries thrown forward by that prince of battle-stokers, Meade, were smoking by this time; and Johnsey saw a melting and a maiming as he looked through the cannon fog towards the lines of Southerners coming on in their majestic array. Even from Little Round Top plunged rifled messengers that tore their ranks to mortal rags.

But, unchecked by this cannon fire, the fifteen thousand assailants grew to seem a monster drove of men stampeding forward with a fury nothing could withstand. And suddenly the roar of Cushing's guns at the umbrella clump lessened and died down. Great terror took hold of Johnsey.

"Our batteries have spent their shot," thought he; "and yonder comes that avalanche of men!"

He picked up a musket, clubbed it, and ran for the point of impact.

As if under an identical impulse, some thousands of others surged towards the same spot.

But this mob of men who threw themselves across Pickett's path found a very cool young hero dominating matters in the Bloody Angle. Cushing sat upon the ground, directing his cannoneers as they tripled their canister. Near spent with his death-wound, he measured the battle with acute eye, mathematically, and sig-

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nalled reopening at the telling moment. It had been a dramatic pause with a thousand thrills. Now the outburst was earth-shaking.

Instant with these happenings were others. Union infantry ran out into the fields on either flank and assailed the enemy. Pettigrew in part dissolved under this flank fire. His North Carolinians swayed to Pickett, and their survivors intermingled. Kemper was shot from his horse, Garnett slain. Hit north, hit south, the vast mass of men pressed in upon itself and gradually became an eastward-driving human wedge, lacking only a point. Just as the wedge struck, Armistead became the point. Coming on behind Kemper and Garnett, he had been shielded by them. Now he cut in between. He moved with tremendous élan. The last was first. His progress was with leaps and bounds, Pasque at his heels. Pasque held aloft the foremost standard. Together they sprang over the stone wall. A rabid thousand followed. The point of Armistead's sword pierced his cap, and this was high above his head. Black as was the field and wild as was the whirl, he saw that Pettigrew's surviving troops were his, as well as all of Pickett's survivors; and his shout, many times repeated, was especially addressed to the North Carolinians. "Come on, ye Caroleeyans!" cried Armistead; "ye brave Caroleeyans!" Finally he fell. Within hand's reach was Cushing. Each was gasping. "You are a bold fellow," said Cushing, "but you couldn't quite come it." Soon they died.

Pasque failed to get as far forward as Armistead. He was on his all-fours on the ground, doubtful whether he could ever stand upon his feet again.

The Federal line had been pierced at the clump of trees; but he knew that the gap had closed and that the day was lost.

He heard the shouts of surrendering men, as they ran

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forward and passed in immense numbers out of the scheme of the Confederacy.

But, desperately struck as he was, he could not bear the idea of surrendering. It was a point of pride and honor with him to return the way he had come and die among those with whom he belonged.

So he sought to push and grope his way back to Seminary Ridge.

Momentarily he experienced a sense of revengeful satisfaction. Then pride melted and sorrow seized him. So poignant was his brute sorrow that during several minutes he forgot the trouble Peter John had brought upon him, forgot the Confederacy, forgot Po.

"There's an officer blinded with his own blood," he heard one soldier say to another. "This way, sir. We'll lead you back."

The two men took him by the arms. He ran with them across the valley. The fire was still fierce upon the field, and one of his guides was shot. Directly Pasque felt the hold of the other break. Perhaps this one had fallen likewise.

Just then he heard some one say to him: "My friend, try to make your way up the hill."

A rabble of retreating troops ran past. The men were overwrought. They were in too great a hurry to notice the Commander-in-Chief. Some of their expressions were audible enough. The truth was bursting out explosively.

"It's all up. We're whipped."

"Dixie's hit in the bowels."

"Where's our Southern independence now?"

"The Eternal God has turned us down."

Pasque saluted General Lee.

"You call me friend, sir," said he. "You don't know who I am. I'm Pasque Le Butt, late of the Louisiana Brigade."

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"Did not your father tell you to come to me?"

"No, sir; my father is in Richmond."

"Then you know nothing of my interview with him on Wednesday?"

"No, sir," said Pasque.

General Lee groaned. "My, my!" said he; "I thought you knew. I assumed that you had met Colonel Le Butt—gallant soul—before he fell with Barksdale. The day the battle opened Colonel Le Butt explained to me the origin of the terrible blunder. A mulatto named Peter John was the cause of it all. Major Le Butt, I feel so sorry about this. I'd gladly change places with you."

He called a passing soldier and placed Pasque under the man's care. Many of the retreating troops came crowding around General Lee.

"It's all my fault, men," said he. "Don't cry. I did it. Rally on the colors beyond the hill."

Pasque's custodian was talkative.

"Yours is a hard case, sir," he remarked. "I can see that. Why, there were tears in Marse Bob's eyes. But it's been a wicked day,—a wicked battle. Forty thousand men have fallen here."

Evening was near. A strange soft light came over the battlefield. Some benign spirit, gently chastising, seemed to be speaking out of the sky:

"Truce to battle. Truce to battle, little men there below. Already too many souls have come up from that field of strife. Bethink you of the hearts you have bruised throughout the land. Truce, truce. I hang my scarf for you above the hills."

Those who looked towards the Round Tops at this hour saw a rainbow arching them—a most beautiful rainbow, putting the battle smoke to shame.

* * * * *

That night the weary Lee drew in his lines. The moon still sailed serenely in the south, enabling him to collect

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such of his wounded as seemed strong enough to bear the hardships of a long retreat. Past twelve, thunder began to boom over beyond South Mountain, and at two in the morning rain gusts swept the field. It was exceedingly grateful to the wretches who, with parched tongues, lay among the rocks—this cooling, cleansing, blood-removing rain near day-dawn of the Fourth; but Tommy Beeswax thought it vile. In the Sanitary wagon, with Po and Jule at either elbow, he had driven with Farabee's body to the house of a friendly farmer ten miles from the battle-ground; and now he was alone with the body in a borrowed dearborn, whipping his horses towards the Bee Farm. Pitch-dark solemnity, lightning shimmers on the dead man's face, and brooks swollen into torrents were some of the things that tried Tommy's patience.

Po and Jule encountered the same storm. They were in the Sanitary wagon on the way back to the battlefield. Po was so much concerned lest the wagon should upset and spoil the good things she had bought at the farmer's for the sufferers on the hospital cots—the milk and eggs and chickens and jam—that she mistook her road and, instead of re-entering the Union lines, found herself pounced upon all at once by Imboden's cavalrymen,—fierce fellows, who lightly and profanely disregarded her protestations. They would have sworn down the protestations of an archangel with a team such as that,—strong horses, A 1 springs, boss canvas cover, like an old-time Conestoga, and a nigger gal who could crack the whip and gee-haw in prime Virginia style. Let General Imboden say so, and she should have her wagon, bless her heart! Meantime, away went the chickens and the eggs and the jam. Po waited all the morning for Imboden, who was busy organizing a train to bear the wounded over the mountains and across the Potomac. He had gathered together ten thousand horses and mules

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and was seizing upon everything available with a wheel under it. His head of column would be seventeen miles from the tail.

"Don't! please don't!" cried Imboden, when Po had found him and asked him to restore her wagon, naming Major Le Butt as one who would avouch for her as a helpful neutral. "Don't ask me to let you have a wheelbarrow. Heavens, madam! Just think how our boys'll suffer, jolting along the rocky, rutty roads in the poor carts we've got. It'll be jolt, jolt, jolt, all the way to Winchester. No, madam, a wagon with springs to it is worth ten million dollars. As for Major Le Butt——"

He paused, took off his hat, and shook the rain from his bedraggled plume.

"Le Butt, did you say, madam? Why, Le Butt's jolting along on Cashtown Road this very minute. I reckon he's got his finisher in this fracas here."

He hurried off, unaware of the blow he had dealt her. Po's new duty made her oblivious to everything else. She began her search for Pasque at the rearmost wagon and passed patiently towards the van. The train moved slowly, with many halts. Night came on. She expected to find Pasque in every freshly visited wagon. She loved every one of the wounded men now for a double reason. They were God's creatures, these suffering souls, each with those at home whose hearts would bleed for them. That was one reason. Next, each was a Pasque. This one with a spurting artery was somebody's Pasque. Po stayed the bleeding, caressed the sufferer, soothed him. If the cruel wagon had no springs she would put springs under it with kindness of word and act. Po's supple hands ached with the work she did, seeking Pasque wagon by wagon, all night long. And how it stretched its length, this monstrous train of maimed, groaning, dying men. It was interminable one might think—yes, interminable and trailing blood as it twisted up the mountain-

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road, through deep-rutted sinks and over cruel rocks that drew wails of anguish from the very men who upon the battlefield had leaped straight at death.

Po found many heroes as she passed forward. Here was a grim old general, racked with pain, but as composed as a sleeping child. Here a boy with his breast torn open, but smiling his thanks for the drink, the woman's touch, the kiss. Here sat a mutilated man in deepest dejection.

"Oh, Pasque!" cried Po; "I've come to take care of you, Pasque! I shall be with you from this moment on,—forever, Pasque! my dearly beloved!"

Love, where do you not go in this world of ours, under the foolish moon? Into the bowers, into the shambles. Yes, into the shambles of war itself.

* * * * *

After that Po never left Pasque. Upon the arrival of Imboden's train at Winchester she took him to Oaks of Saul, where were Dr. Eubanks and Marcia and Eph. Elizabeth came up from Richmond, and Rhetta, too. They whispered together—Elizabeth and Marcia and Rhetta. Yes, Po's devotion to Pasque was entire.

Spring came, and with it a renewal of strength and hope in Pasque. Po at last was his. "I love her to-day; I'll love her to-morrow; I'll love her a thousand years." He bethought him of his vow, even while uttering the ceremonial words. Could it be that some gracious spirit in touch with heaven itself had hovered above them the day Nat struck, and had predestined them each for the other? Or was it what men call Fate that had drawn him to Po? Else how did it happen that, in the very height of his pride and haughtiness, Love subdued him in a day, making him tender towards her and inexplicably bound to her in spirit? Theirs was, indeed, a deep affinity. In certain dreamy moods, when mystic thoughts possessed Pasque, he felt that he had been hers in some

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far-away, pleasant garden-place; in some former age; or upon some distant planet. Yes, these were dreams; but, now, in all reality, she was to have his unending homage.

Once more spring came; and, with it, peace everywhere. And, to the Oaks, spring and Peace brought Johnsey, most eager of bridegrooms. Oh, the balm of those days, coming after so many blows and bruises; and the glory of them! For the promise in the humblest sprout and twig and upcoming grass blade was greater somehow than it had been in any year since the nation was a nation, and the fresh young flowers meant more; and, as Unc' Eph declared to Rhetta and her "Bonny-clabber," the birds sang "sassier," and all was well.

THE END

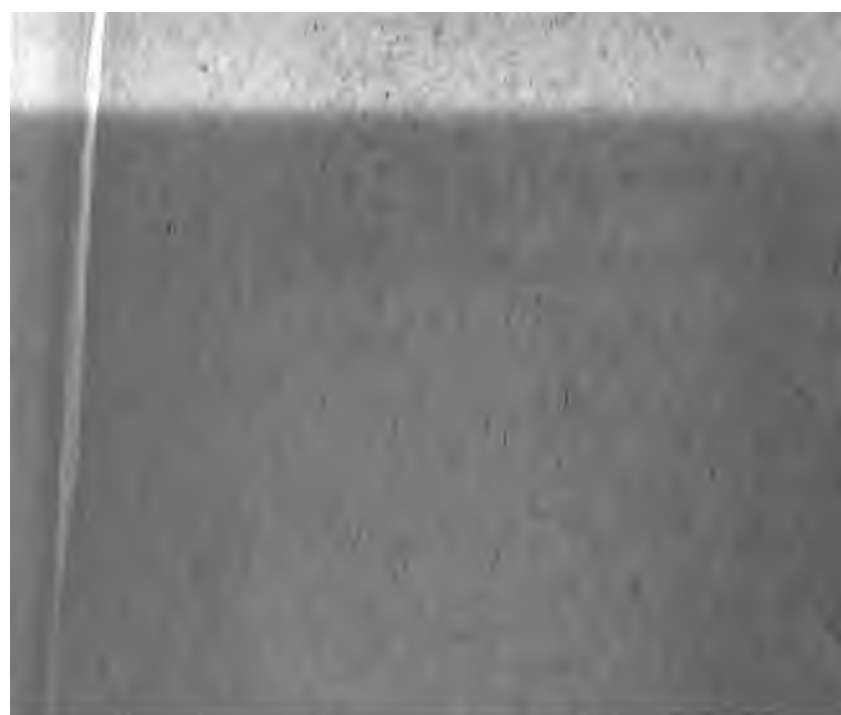
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